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ABSTRACT

The six articles in this first issue comprise a critical discourse about theories, practices, and research with the intent of realizing the potential of adult learning to bring about social change. "Adult Education and Empowerment for Individual and Community Development" (Jack Mezirow) outlines and updates the author's transformation theory of adult learning. "'Really Useful Knowledge': Linking Theory and Practice" (Jane L. Thompson) brings Marxist, socialist, feminist understanding to bear on current political developments and teaching practices. "Community Development and Adult Education: Prospects for Change?" (Brid Connolly) explores community development's role in addressing poverty, exclusion, and the unequal position of women, and adult education's role in bringing about liberating social change. "The Future of Adult Education: Learning towards a New Democracy" (Ted Fleming) critically explores the Irish Government's White Paper on Education and considers a future role for adult education in a democracy of free citizens. "Participation and Rural Voluntary Organisations in Ireland: A Case Study" (Tom Collins, Anne Ryan) explores the implications of approaches to participation ranging from redistributing power and resources to merely harnessing local energy to improve project delivery. "Comparability and Future Research in Adult Education: Methodological Challenges in the Euro-Delphi Survey" (Anne Murphy) examines problems of comparability and future policy development in transnational adult education research. (YLB)

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Radical Learning for Liberation

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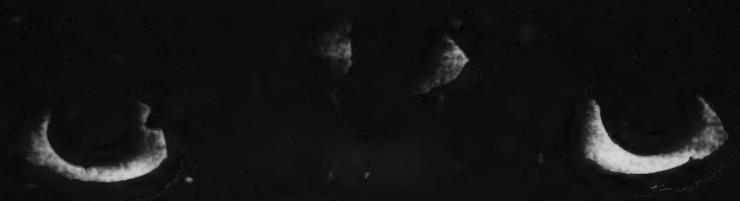

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Radical Learning for Liberation

Editors

Brid Connolly, Ted Fleming, David McCormack, Anne Ryan

Maynooth Adult and Community Education
Occasional Series
Number 1

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The Maynooth Adult and Community Education [MACE] was encouraged and actively supported by all the staff of the Centre for Adult and Community Education at Maynooth and in particular by:

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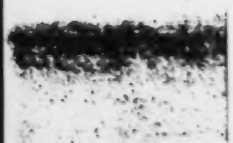

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Introduction

The Centre for Adult and Community Education at Maynooth offers programmes of professional training at undergraduate, postgraduate and higher degree levels; an extensive off-campus programme of community research, planning and development support and a large extra-mural outreach programme for over 2,000 students. As part of the adult education community in Ireland the Centre would in this series like to contribute to and nurture a critical discourse about theories, practices and research with the practical intent of objectively realising the potential of adult learning to bring about social change.

The Maynooth Adult and Community Education (MACE) Occasional Series is an attempt to speak of ideas and theories which underpin our practice. It is hoped that the Series will contribute to strengthening good practice by providing a forum for critical debate. The series will be concerned with the theme of liberation particularly for those marginalised in our society. The emphasis will be on a radical quest for really useful knowledge, critical intelligence and transformative social change. If this sounds ambitious then calling this the first of a series is equally so!

For over a decade now a quiet revolution has been taking place in adult education in Ireland. The change is primarily about the way participation has become a key concept in both the discourse and the practice of adult education. This collection of articles is concerned with the centrality of this concept in our thinking, practice and research.

For many, women's community education in particular has been one of the best examples of where a participatory approach has been articulated and practised. Many other programmes have pioneered participatory approaches; play a significant role in changing the lives of individuals; affect real social and political change and illustrate how adult education has a role in dealing with the personal and social aspects of a wide range of situations such as addiction, unemployment, disability, poverty and other kinds of marginalisation.

The body of knowledge which underpins some of these programmes has not been clearly outlined. The revolutionary practice of so much of what is happening will be diluted in the absence of critical thinking and transformative practice.

Almost as soon as 'participation' becomes a crucial word in the vocabulary of adult educators and almost before we have teased out the full personal and political significance of the concept we find an interesting thing happening. The word is stolen. Stolen by those who use it to mean nothing like its intended meaning in adult education. This has happened with other powerful concepts too, empowerment for example. Now those with a vested interest in maintaining the status quo in so many programmes and proposals mention partnership. So many now use this lan-

guage without ever unearthing the roots of the concept and identifying the implications for the way power and resources are distributed.

Power is exercised by powerful elites in society. This exercise of power is done by promoting systems of ideas which are 'beyond question', 'obviously true', and even 'self evident'. When questioned these great truths turn out to be false. Mezirow, in the tradition of Freire, clearly justifies the superiority of critical conscientization or transformative learning as against the uncritical discourse of conventional wisdom.

When it was a new word, participation was seen as a concept which indicated that new power relationships should be put in place. Participation does not mean consulting and then going about one's business as one wishes. Collins and Ryan also see participation as a redistribution of power. Thompson too is clear about this in proposing that we 'teach to transgress' or become 'undutiful'. These contributors agree that 'really useful knowledge' is that which redistributes power not in the interests of the powerful or the few but in the interest of all.

People who work in adult education are usually busy, over extended and hugely preoccupied with getting things done. In a field which has for so long needed to establish itself in the national agenda, attract funding and resources it is understandable that some aspects of our work are given less attention. Writing, reading, thinking and researching along with strategic planning and policy making are among the areas always in need of further attention and often pushed down the agendas of our meetings and frequently even out of our discourse.

The articles in this book have come out of the work of the Centre in the years 1995-96. They are contributions by the staff of the Centre and visiting speakers at conferences. It is hoped that coalitions and solidarities will be forged by the launching of this series and others will be encouraged to share and exchange ideas.

Jack Mezirow addressed the 1995 Maynooth Conference on "Adult Education and Local Development: The Global Lessons". As Professor of Adult Education at Columbia University, New York, Mezirow has made an extraordinary contribution to our understanding of adult learning theory and in his paper "Adult Education and Empowerment for Individual and Community Development" he outlines and updates his transformation theory of adult learning. By making meaning through collaborative discourse we are engaged in transformative learning and redefining the concept of community.

In 1996 as part of the European Year of Lifelong Learning the Centre co-hosted a conference with Aontas (The National Adult Education Association) and NCDE (National Committee for Development Education) entitled "Empowerment and Action: A New Agenda for Lifelong Learning". The keynote address was given by Jane Thompson,

Dean of Humanities at Ruskin College, Oxford. She is associated most often with working-class women in adult education. In her article on "'Really Useful Knowledge': Linking Theory and Practice" she brings a Marxist, socialist, feminist understanding to bear on current political developments and teaching practices. She is concerned about making links between the social and material conditions of oppression and the possibility of adult education as a tool in the pursuit of personal and collective liberation.

Women's community education is one of the most exciting, innovative and radical development in Irish adult education. Brid Connolly of the Centre for Adult and Community Education at Maynooth in her article on "Community Development and Adult Education: Prospects for Change?" explores the origins and role of community development in addressing poverty, exclusion and the unequal position of women. She assesses the part adult education plays in bringing about social change which is liberating rather than domesticating.

One of the most important recent developments in Irish education has been the publication of the Government's White Paper on Education. The Aontas conference in 1995 was part of the adult education response to this document. Ted Fleming, of the Centre for Adult and Community Education at Maynooth, in his address critically explored the White Paper. In critiquing the consultation process and the presentation of the White Paper, Fleming identifies representative democracy, with its emphasis on vested interests, as deeply problematic. By taking a closer look at what happens in self-help groups and personal development courses the emergence in practice of an alternative and more participatory democracy can be seen.

A major part of the work of the Centre involves undertaking research and evaluation studies for a range of statutory and voluntary agencies. An evaluation of Macra na Feirme was undertaken by Tom Collins and Anne Ryan of the Centre for Adult and Community Education. "Participation and Rural Voluntary Organisations in Ireland: A Case Study" investigates the nature of participation in the context of rural voluntary organisations in Ireland with particular reference to the issues and problems that emerged in the evaluation of Macra na Feirme. They explore the implications of approaches to participation that range from a focus on redistributing power and resources to one of merely harnessing local energy to improve project delivery.

The Euro-Delphi Survey on the future of adult education and lifelong learning in Europe was conducted in sixteen countries between 1993 and 1995. Using the experience of managing the Irish element of this important research project, Anne Murphy of the Centre for Adult and Community Education examines the problems of comparability and future-policy development in transnational adult education research. She discusses how some of the problems were overcome in the Euro-Delphi

Survey: "The Future, Goals and Policies of Adult Education in Europe 1995". She suggests that there are two research challenges faced by the survey, one of 'comparability' and the other of 'future-orientation'.

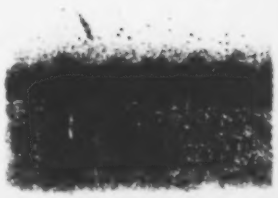
Part of the power of Mezirow's and Thompson's articles come about because of their ability to name in fresh language the kernel of what we are about in adult education - before the ideas are colonised. There is a rush against time to keep the central goal in sight: adult learning and education for the liberation of oppressed people and the transformation of unjust social structures and systems. This is Radical Learning for Liberation.

Brid Connolly
Ted Fleming
Dave McCormack
Anne Ryan

Adult Education and Empowerment for Individual and Community Development

Jack Mezirow
Teachers College, Columbia University, New York

Paper presented at the Conference, "Adult Education and Local Development: The Global Lessons," St Patrick's College, Maynooth, Ireland, May 24, 1995.



We live in a frightening time of crisis, in a high risk society, a world turning away from a commitment to find agreement across cultures in favour of vicious, senseless terror; of rampant religious fundamentalism breeding suicidal killers of innocent people; of unpronounceable cults with messianic masters proclaiming the end is here and determined to take us with them; of primitive tribalism and murderous ethnic cleansing; of a form of global economics that enriches absentee owners and exploits the poor, in which most workers are deprived of job security or hope for a rewarding career; of rampaging reactionary politicians who would deny government a legitimate function to protect the weak, support social programs or to regulate industry; of phony popular movements created to influence public policy; of the sometimes legal bribery of public officials by special interest groups; of hypocritical smothering of human rights concerns by democratic governments in favour of economic gains, of a democratic public sphere reduced to television talk shows, negative commercials and opinion polls; of clandestine sales of nuclear bomb elements to evil tin pot dictators; of a bloated and entrenched military hell bent to resist reductions in its budgets; of ecological disturbances and pollution, uncontrollable population growth and biogenic threats; and of unprecedented risks implicit in new technologies like computerisation and television.

For adult educators, the question is how to help learners cope with a frightening, fast changing world. A major problem is that learners cannot know what they need to know to deal with such a high risk society. In a less demanding era, Socrates posed the situation as a learning paradox:

- a person can learn only that which he doesn't know,
- but if he doesn't know it,
- how does he know what he is seeking to learn?

I would like to introduce some of the highlights of Transformation Theory (Mezirow, 1990, 1992), a theoretical model of how adults learn that I believe has particular relevance for both adult education for community development and for demystifying Socrates' learning paradox.

Transformation Theory suggests that we "learn what we seek to learn" as the result of transforming our frame of reference. By redefining or reframing the problem we come to see our learning needs from a different perspective. This transformative learning occurs when we find that our old ways of understanding are no longer working well for us.

Transformation Theory is an explanation of how our frames of reference influence the way we make meaning and how they may be transformed to empower adult learners and to foster community development.

The Structure of Meaning

A frame of reference is the structure of assumptions with which we interpret our sense perceptions and, by doing so, create our experiences. Assumptions are taken-for-granted beliefs we have about reality. They

often serve as tacit rules of thumb or are expressed as conventional wisdom that guides our actions. A culture is composed of shared frames of reference and these are acquired through cultural assimilation and are often reproduced through schooling.

Transformative learning experiences are emancipatory in that they free learners from the constraints and distortions of their own frames of reference. A more fully developed and dependable frame of reference is one that is more inclusive, differentiating, more open to alternative perspectives and more integrative of experience.

We learn in one of three ways: by extending or refining our existing frames of reference, by learning new ones or by transforming our existing frames of reference.

There are two dimensions to a frame of reference. One is our abstract habits of expectation - our "meaning perspectives" that serve as filters or codes to shape, delimit and often distort our experience. Three sets of codes filter and constrain our understanding of reality: -socio-linguistic (e.g., ideologies, norms, language codes), psychological (e.g.. personality traits or repressed parental prohibitions that continue to dictate ways of feeling and acting in adulthood) and epistemic (e.g., learning styles, focusing on wholes vs. parts, on the concrete vs. the abstract, sensory preferences).

The second dimension of our frame of reference is the concrete result of our meaning perspective. This is our point of view, a "meaning scheme" composed of the specific beliefs, feelings, judgments, intuitions and attitudes that accompany and shape a specific interpretation.

For example, being ethnocentric (expecting groups other than your own to be inferior or threatening) is a generalised habit of expectation resulting in a point of view that is suspicious, demeaning, fearful or hostile toward an specific individual of a race, class, religion or nationality other than your own.

Transformative Learning

The process of transforming our frames of reference begins with critical reflection. What I mean by critical reflection is the process of assessing one's assumptions and presuppositions. Through critical reflection we can change the way we see the content of a problem or see our process of problem solving. This can result in transforming our meaning scheme or point of view. We may also become critically reflective of the premises upon which the problem is posed, how the problem is framed or defined. Premise reflection can lead to a transformation in our meaning perspective or habit of mind. It is easier to change our point of view because we can "try on" a different point of view and see its relative advantage, but we cannot do this as easily with our habits of mind.

Let me give you an example of a perspective transformation from my own experience. For many years I worked in the field of community development in third world countries. I thought of my work as designed to provide new opportunities for village people to participate in decision making about their villages - to assign priorities (and provide the labour) for village improvement - building roads, drainage systems, schools, wells, health dispensaries, creating literacy and family planning programs or adopting new agricultural methods. Governments or private organisations provided the technical assistance and materials necessary to complete the selected projects.

By their involvement in such projects, I believed villagers could learn a form of tutelary participatory democracy that would prepare them for subsequent full participation in political democracy. In this work, I would often focus critically on the ways of motivating villagers to participate in local projects - the content of my problem. I might also examine critically the process by which this model of community development could succeed - for example, could government officials, schooled in a rigid, colonial, civil service system, be retreaded and succeed as community development agents? My point of view about my work changed significantly as I assessed my assumptions and acquired insight into each of these and other content and process questions.

In the 1970s, I encountered the writings of Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich and was jarred into an awareness that challenged the validity of my very premise regarding adult learning thorough participatory action in community development projects as preparation for active citizenship in political democracy. Freire pointed out a crucial missing dimension in my mental model: "conscientisation" (critical reflection), the empowering learning process by which villagers change their traditional frames of reference by becoming aware and critical of their assumptions about their long established dependency relationships with those who controlled their lives - often the big landowner -patrón or zamindar - exploitive merchants, employers or political leaders - and take collective action on their reflective insights to effect social change.

Critical reflection on the limitations of my assumptions about adult education for community development transformed my taken-for-granted meaning perspective. I was forced to significantly modify a set of norms and roles that I had accepted without question determining the way I had thought of community development education (a socio-linguistic code that constituted a meaning perspective). My whole focus on how to work in adult education changed, my practice changed and my professional interests in research and adult learning theory were redirected, a process extending over the past two decades. In Freire's terms, I had an experience in conscientisation; in the parlance of the womens' movement, I was engaged in consciousness raising, in psychotherapeutic terms, I achieved theoretical reflection - a metacognitive awareness of my own strategy for solving my problem. In the terminology of Transformation Theory, I experienced a perspective transformation.

Forms of Critical Reflection

There are different functions of critical reflection. One, "objective reframing," may involve the critical review a text or a pause in the instrumental action of problem solving to identify a new metaphor that redefines the problem. "Action learning," as this concept is found in management training, brings together managers with diverse specialisations and frames of reference to explore new ways to pose or solve a problem. The focus is on the objective problem rather than on oneself.

Another dimension, "subjective reframing" pertains to critical self reflection and involves examining the reasons why we have acquired distorted or dysfunctional frames of reference, their nature and their consequences. Subjective reframing involves critically examining the constitutive process of frame formation itself.

Subjective reframing is involved in the most significant transformative learning experiences. Subjective reframing is a common feature of adult learning and is exemplified by my own perspective transformation reported above. Various forms of educational intervention designed to foster subjective reframing include Freire's educational approach, consciousness raising groups, and cognitive psychotherapy.

Learning Domains

It is important to differentiate between two kinds of learning. One is instrumental learning - learning to control or manipulate the environment - task oriented learning with the purpose of improving performance. The other is learning what others mean when they communicate with us -communicative learning - that involves intentions, values, feelings and moral decisions. Both the learning process and appropriate educational interventions are very different for each.

In instrumental learning, what is communicated may be tested empirically through measurement to determine whether it is true, i.e., whether it is as it has been asserted to be. Reasoning involves making hypotheses and deductively testing them. In communicative learning, however, what is communicated does not often give itself to empirical tests of truth. Here we are concerned with the justification of an interpretation or a belief -we need to know not only whether it is true, but is it coherent, are feelings expressed authentic, is it appropriate to a given set of norms, is the person communicating truthful or attempting to deceive? Reasoning proceeds by identifying a metaphor and letting each step in exploring the implications of the analogy suggest the next one. As educators, our goal in communicative learning is to assist learners to negotiate their own meanings and values rather than to passively accept social reality as defined by others. This is what transformative learning is about.

Collaborative Discourse

There are only four ways to establish the validity or justification of a problematic belief or an interpretation - by turning to tradition, to authority, -the courts, politics or religion- to brute force, or by turning to discourse.

Unlike ordinary everyday discussion or dialogue, collaborative discourse involves an exclusive focus on the content - deliberately weighing the evidence, assessing arguments or reasons advanced in support or opposition, examining alternative viewpoints and on critically examining assumptions in order to reach a best judgment on the justification of a belief. An institutionalised model of collaborative discourse is the university seminar.

We turn for collaborative discourse to those we believe will be the most informed, "objective" and rational to assess the justification of the interpretation we are making or our belief. We turn to those whom we trust, and discourse is more effective when participants share a sense of what Habermas calls empathic solidarity. The resulting consensual judgments are contingent, i.e., judgments that are useful until we encounter new and more persuasive perspectives, evidence or arguments that subsequent discourse establishes as yielding better judgments. This is a continuing process. We do not always agree, but through collaborative discourse, we can better understand or we may find a synthesis of opposing views.

The assumptions of rational discourse are that beliefs should contain no logical contradictions, reasons for believing them can be advanced and assessed, concepts will become more intelligible when analysed and we have criteria with which to know when the belief is justified or not.

The Conditions of Collaborative Discourse

Jürgen Habermas (1984) holds that the ideal conditions of undistorted rational discourse are implied in the very nature of human communication. However, if you are uncomfortable with the concept of universal ideals, as many post-modernists are, then certainly, this ideal of undistorted communication is implied in any democratic society or in any society that wishes to foster democracy. Ideally, the conditions of rational discourse are also ideal conditions of effective adult learning. As such, they are crucial to educational efforts to facilitate adult learning.

Participants must have:

- a feeling of trust and empathic solidarity with those participating in discourse
- accurate and full information
- freedom from coercion and distorting self-deception
- equal opportunity to participate in discussion, to have their voices heard and understood.

Participants in an ideal adult discourse will also have previously learned to

- weigh evidence and assess arguments objectively
- respect alternative perspectives
- critically reflect upon presuppositions and their consequences
- accept an informed, objective, rational consensus as a legitimate test of validity of a belief, pending more evidence or argument.

Freedom, equality, participatory democracy, tolerance, solidarity, caring, inclusiveness are social values implicit in the ideal process of making meaning through collaborative discourse.

These values are rooted in the nature of human communication, rather than in the Western idealism of the Enlightenment. They also constitute a defining concept of community.

Of course, like every other ideal, ideal discourse seldom exists in our common experience. We all could point to the devastating distortions created by inequalities in the distribution of power and influence associated with race or ethnicity, gender, and class that distort one's ability to participate under such idealised circumstances. But as an ideal, this model of undistorted communication provides us with a goal and standard against which to judge our efforts as learners and as educators.

We can also use the ideal conditions of human discourse to judge our society's efforts or lack of efforts to foster these crucial conditions of learning. This is why adult educators become social activists. As learners in a democracy become aware of how taken-for-granted, oppressive, social norms and practices and institutionalised cultural ideologies have restrained or distorted their own beliefs, they become understandably motivated toward taking collective action to make social institutions and systems more responsive to the needs of those they serve. Whether, when and how they do so depends upon situational factors. Some react to critically achieved insights negatively by dropping out or seeking escape by immersion in alternative life styles or modes of dress.

Learning to participate openly, critically and empathically in collaborative discourse is crucial for adult learners. Learning to facilitate this kind of learning is indispensable for educators of adults. It is the particular function of adult educators to create communities of collaborative discourse in which distortions in communication due to differences in power and influence are minimised. Educators work with adult learners to deliberately create and enforce norms conducive to undistorted communication. Learning reflective participation in collaborative discourse and in social action is central to adult learning and to the development of learning communities

Community Development

Adult educators concerned with community development encourage learners to become aware of community problems and to participate actively in collective community problem solving efforts. This involves two areas of

practice. One involves fostering critical reflection on social conditions, practices, institutions, systems and traditional frames of reference that distort communication and constrain learning. In the context of families, educational institutions, organisations and in the broader community the adult educator's role is the same. It is to develop true communities of collaborative discourse leading to action. This will often involve providing protective learning environments and helping learners learn to discourse effectively.

The other community development function of adult educators is to help adult learners who have already become aware of the need for collective social action to learn what they need to know to act effectively. This often requires specialised knowledge and the services of an adult educator experienced in social action education.

Although adult educators do not become leaders, advocates or organisers of collective social action, they may help learners learn how to assume these roles, to anticipate and plan to overcome constraining situational factors, to deal with emotional resistance to taking action or to find relevant information needed to act.

The social context is of great importance in determining whether transformative learning will result in collective social action. For example, this is much more likely to happen when such learning occurs within the context of a social movement that involves serving a larger course, many role models, group support, opportunities for collaborative discourse and encourages active participation in social action.

People interact in communities according to patterns of pre-set traditions, through efficient systems, which organise people along planned lines, and through the communicative exchange of reasons leading to agreement among them. Adult education is about helping people learn to coordinate their actions openly to reach understandings. For adult educators, community development means fostering learning communities in which people can reflect critically, discourse collaboratively and act collectively.

Transformation theory envisions an ideal society composed of communities of learners engaged in a continuing collaborative inquiry to determine the truth or arrive at a tentative best judgment about alternative beliefs, a community cemented by empathic solidarity, committed to the social and political practice of participatory democracy, informed through critical reflection, continuously engaged in collaborative discourse and collectively taking reflective action, when necessary, to assure that social systems and local institutions, organisations, and practices are responsive to the human needs of those they serve.

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'Really Useful Knowledge': Linking Theory and Practice

Jane L. Thompson
Dean of Humanities, Ruskin College, Oxford

Paper presented as Keynote address at the Maynooth/Aontas/NCDE Conference Empowerment and Action: A New Agenda for Lifelong Learning (Dublin 18th - 19th October 1996).

In the run up to the forthcoming American Presidential elections a bemused British journalist Charles Wheeler - asks one of Bob Dole's closest advisers 'Why has it taken Bob Dole so long to get round to telling us about his principles and about the kinds of concerns he feels deeply about? We've had no sense so far of a man who is informed or guided by anything other than the 'immediate' (Newsnight August 16th 1996). The adviser replies that Dole is 'a doer' - so busy with the 'mechanics of politics' - the day to day demands of 'getting things done'. Being responsible for the 'mechanics' and 'getting things done' means you don't have a lot of time (apparently) to think very much about the greater scheme of things, why you make some choices rather than others, where your actions fit, what might be the consequences of what you do. We are meant to be impressed by a 'practical man' who rolls up his shirt sleeves and who is quick off the mark when it comes to getting things done. John Major has been quick off the mark in cultivating the same approach as he takes off his jacket, rolls up his sleeves, climbs onto his soap box and sets about answering prearranged questions from a carefully invited audience - most recently from the stage of the Tory party conference in Bournemouth (Bournemouth October 1996) A strategy supposed to indicate practical politics, the common touch. 'Did you like it?' He grins er.thusiastically. Desperately trying to reinforce the presentation of himself as 'Honest John the boy from Brixton' who does what's best for Britain without getting too tied up by philosophy or ideology. Unlike Tony Blair who is still associated in many people's minds - inaccurately as it happens - with ideas that derive from socialism.

In the case of Dole the existence of any grander narrative is denied - almost as a testimony to action rather than theory. Probably it's not so surprising. Politics on both sides of the Atlantic in recent years have been characterised by short termism and pragmatism; revealing the cynicism of bland faced re-definitions of the latest U-turn enforced resignation or scandal whilst skillfully avoiding the principled point; responding to what is immediate and leaving the medium or long term future to take care of itself. Or to someone else to sort out. Especially in relation to the environment. Short term thinking in Britain currently finds the Tories embarrassingly keen to sell off and get rid of anything and everything which still remains within the public sector, before an incoming Labour Government can get their hands on it - including British Rail, the administration of the Social Security system, Ministry of Defence housing, and the Post Office. Whilst the Labour Party is busily shedding its philosophic commitment to historic left of centre principles for fear of being considered too dangerous, too visionary, too radical or too socialist by those whose votes they want to count on.

On both sides of the Atlantic the struggle for political power is being contested by individuals who seem to grow increasingly similar to each other (in terms of ethnicity, class, gender and ideas), with similar allegiances to corporate interests, and who seem more and more concerned to represent only those groups who have the same kind of stake as

themselves in what is currently defined as society. Leaving the ones who are left - the 'rest' and the 'others' - more and more excluded. In the US this means that on a good day almost half the population will not exercise their vote in presidential elections and more than half won't bother to vote in congressional and senate elections. (That's if they're even registered.) Not because they are apathetic or disillusioned or stupid. But because the circumstances of their existence has little or no bearing on the agenda of either of the two presidential candidates and does not feature within the priorities of either of the two main parties which govern the United States. Why should urban ghetto dwellers, without jobs and without welfare, or Native Americans whose lands have been plundered, or Mexican immigrants who are denied citizenship rights, or rural black cotton pickers, housed in shacks along the muddy flatlands of the Mississippi go through the motions of voting for individuals and parties which have little knowledge of their lives, and even less interest in finding out, except to keep them in check? Why would they be persuaded that their vote might 'make a difference' when they have no evidence to support the accuracy of such an obvious piece of ideology? In such circumstances, despite the platitudes and rhetoric about democracy, the widespread non participation in voting by groups who have been effectively disenfranchised is not actually seen as a major cause for concern by those whose interests are reflected in the political system. Not voting is a consequence, and has by now become a necessary characteristic, of what counts as democracy, and which sustains the particular brand of un-representation established as a political system in the United States.

In Britain the trends are similar though not yet so extreme. Seventeen years of right wing Conservative governments have deepened the divisions between rich and poor; between those living in 'traditional families' and those who do not; between those who have jobs and roofs over their heads and those who do not; between those who are white and those who are black. Probably also between those who are young and male, who are educated in run down schools lacking adequate resources, who are the ready targets for drugs and unfulfilled consumer aspirations, who have few prospects of either getting a job or buying into the housing market and those who are female or older, living in the same neighbourhoods, whose communities are being destroyed by the pressures of poverty, unemployment, hopelessness and increasing competition for scarce resources. These are divisions which in turn cement distinctions between those who do and who don't see any purpose in getting too excited about politics. For people without much recognisable power there is no obvious connection between putting a cross on a ballot paper and changing their experience of society. In Margaret Thatcher's immortal words 'there is no such thing as society' and by definition less and less reason to assume any responsibility for anyone other than oneself. Whether one has power or not. Her's is something of a non-society, in which minorities who live in poverty, like single parents (mostly women), the elderly (mostly women), young unemployed, people with the kind of disabilities which prevent them from working and

in some cases from looking after themselves, as well as different ethnic minorities (who can be found in all the other categories as well) are termed by some an 'under class' and by others 'scroungers'. Whatever the label, these are groups of people who have less and less reason to vote in conventional elections for politicians whose world view is increasingly shaped by the assumption that democracy is about representation rather than participation, that charters can guarantee citizens rights, that legislation concerned with the protection of welfare provision, workers rights, environmental sanity, and even human rights, must always, it seems, be subject to restrictions on public spending, the promotion of free market competition and the maintenance of a strong and centralised state committed to defending corporate profits.

In such circumstances politicians like Dole and Clinton in the United States do not need to articulate the theories which inform their policies. They are implicit. Their actions speak for themselves and have been understood as such by all of those who take no interest in elections. That's why they've voted with their feet. In Britain, and in other advanced industrialised societies for all I know, which are similarly committed to free market economics and restrictions on public spending, the slide towards political systems which operate on the basis of widespread non-participation, especially by those who have little stake in what is on offer, is a 'price worth paying' according to those whose social and economic advantage is secured by such arrangements. In these circumstances, minority groups of numerous kinds, with little purchase on power, and few advocates in high places, are easy enough to stereotype and to hold responsible for their own alleged deficiencies. It is commonplace, for example, according to dominant definitions of social reality, to account for the continuing inequalities between men and women, including increased levels of male violence and child sexual abuse, as being the choice of women who are 'their own worst enemies' or else the fault of nasty feminists who wear the 'wrong kind of clothes' and can't agree among themselves about what should be done. It is assumed that the widespread demoralisation of entire communities by unemployment, cuts in public spending, poor health born of poverty, restrictive legislation and the intensification of punitive policing policies, is in fact the result of apathy, welfare dependency, a general decline in morality, poor parenting skills and the absence of any sense of personal responsibility. In such communities increasing numbers of people don't vote and don't readily participate in the processes of decision making which affect their lives. And whilst conventional wisdom denounces them for their fecklessness and pathological deficiencies, the gulf between those who do have recognisable interests to defend, and those whose material conditions are barely taken seriously, continues to widen.

Meanwhile political recourse to pragmatism, dignified as some kind of virtue which is said to 'get things done', disguises the extent to which underlying, profound and quite self conscious theoretic principles have actually determined the character of what is taking shape.

Those who are concerned about education will have noticed the same pre-occupation in recent years with 'getting things done' rather than 'wasting time' on theories and debating philosophy students into courses, throughput, output, progression routes, research profiles, accreditation schemes, calculations of competence, quality assurance, performance indicators, league tables, the appointment of management consultants, the development of marketing strategies, the measurement of everything that moves on a five point scale - all turned into statistics and graphs designed to produce efficiency savings and to release money from government funding agencies. At the same time education is being transformed into training. Judgements regarding excellence are increasingly determined on behalf of employers, and measured by inspectors employed by government appointed quangos, who are required to stimulate competition and to establish financial targets built upon systems of penalties. Academics have become managers. Managers need have no previous 'hands-on experience' of education. Students and adult learners are spoken of as consumers. Teachers are regarded as potential revolutionaries and/or incompetents, who need to be motivated by the threat of losing their jobs, and monitored by excessive amounts of bureaucracy, as a way of using up their energy and distracting them from exercising too much critical intelligence. Like their teachers, students and learners are generally required to think as little as possible, to question even less, and to concentrate on accumulating credits and developing competencies which can be assessed by forms that can be measured by machines. As more and more people collect credits (rather like lottery tickets) which lead to qualifications that are widely considered to be totally unconnected to mind expanding or life transforming experience not to mention having little or no relationship to interesting, useful or well paid employment (if at all) - it would now seem a matter of real urgency to consider what all of this might signify. Especially if one retains some illusions about participation being a necessary ingredient of democracy. And some conviction that education can also be a weapon in the war against poverty. A weapon which might indeed be used to overcome discrimination, exploitation, exclusion and violence. Which can assist in the process of transforming societies based on inequalities, vested interests and injustice into societies in which all citizens are more directly involved in the decision making which shapes their lives. Not simply as individuals who, in the spirit of free enterprise and self reliance, have personal responsibilities and duties to perform, and who become locked into competition for scarce resources which are frequently secured at the expense of others. But as members of collectivities which share material and social conditions that derive from the recognition of interdependence and mutual regard. And which are based on the simple conviction that no one is truly free until we all are. A conviction grounded in shared social and communal responsibilities, and the expectation of generalised participation in decision making, however local. Which is guided by a vision that extends beyond the boundaries of what is to what might be and to the kind of understandings which take account of wider, international and global considerations.

You may by now be wondering what all this has got to do with 'really useful knowledge' and 'linking theory and practice'. Social and political systems which create exclusion and lack of participation in decision making seriously damage peoples lives. People don't on the whole get angry. Creative anger could be constructive. They get demoralised or disaffected. We might like to think that communities in crisis automatically develop a wonderful 'sense of togetherness' and 'community spirit' which 'keeps them going' despite the odds. But they are just as likely - more likely perhaps - to release feelings of frustration and alienation upon each other rather than on the structural and political causes of their hopelessness. Men living in communities which are in crisis initiate more criminal activity at the expense of each other, more domestic violence, more racist attacks. Their communities are the breeding grounds for anti-democratic and extremist responses to the accumulation of grievances born of economic depression and lack of recognition. These are not the kind of responses which education can resolve. But they are the kind of circumstances in which 'particular kinds of education' might have a part to play. And by this I don't mean league tables and quality assurance mechanisms. Or aromatherapy for beginners. I mean political education.

In adult education there is a long tradition, dating back to at least the nineteenth century, even longer if we include the writing of Mary Wolstonecraft, concerned with the relationship between education and social change. The radical tradition in adult education has argued not simply for knowledge which is deemed to be 'the best that has been thought and said' - which is the basis of the extra mural and liberal traditions. Or for knowledge that is vocational and practical - in order to make people into more skillful and responsible workers - which is the antecedent of the current pre-occupation with training. Or for knowledge which is devoid of any social context but is related to 'personhood' and 'individual self fulfilment' - the concern of the essentially American 'human growth' school of thinking popular in the seventies. The radical tradition in adult education judges 'the usefulness of knowledge' in relation to its contribution to assisting social and political change. Especially in relation to those whose social, material and political conditions are based on oppression, inequality or exploitation. All words which are fairly unfashionable in these days of post modern, free market and entrepreneurial thinking. But not - I think - obsolete as lived conditions. When chartists and Christian socialists and co-operators and feminists and early trade union organisers argued for working class and women's education in the nineteenth century they wanted 'really useful knowledge' that would help them to understand both the nature of their present condition and how to get out of it. 'Really useful knowledge' was political knowledge which could be used to challenge the relations of oppression and inequality from which they suffered. In this sense arguments about the liberationary possibilities of education have a long history within the agendas of progressive political movements concerned with overcoming structural injustices and inequalities.

The radical tradition in adult education based on 'really useful knowledge' implies the development of critical thinking, the recognition of human agency, political growth and the confidence to challenge what is generally taken for granted as inevitable. It means deriving theory from the authority of lived material experience, and using it in ways which connect with the similar or related experiences of others, in order to establish a 'critical mass' which can join together to develop collective forms of social action to achieve political change. The emphasis is not on 'competitive individualism' or the pursuit of 'individual rights' at the expense of others. But on communal responses to confronting related oppressions and to promoting change. It's about - another old fashioned word - the significance of praxis, of relating theory to practice, in which one informs the other, in a continuing and dialectical process of making changes on the basis of applying critical intelligence to what is understood from experience - in ways that re-constitute both the situation and the subject.

Deriving theory from experience and in turn relating it to practice is far from being a crude mechanical or behaviourist approach. It allows for the exploration of 'meaning' and of how people make sense of their lived experiences. It allows for comparisons to be made with the meanings articulated by others. It can connect the understanding of individuals and collectivities of individuals in ways that create a critical mass. It also has something useful to contribute to the understanding of what constitutes power. Power does not lie simply in the remit of dominant groups who down load it - so to speak - onto less powerful victims. It does operate in this way, and structural supports for the accumulation and administration of power are clearly the back drop against which any opportunities for the redistribution of power, the renegotiation of power-based relationships, and the recognition of available room in which to manoeuvre, must be measured. But the exercise of power, and what might be re-defined as power, is also present within all of us, arid within the relationships we make with each other. To be exercised in more or less oppressive or more or less egalitarian ways. Focused with energy and precision, and informed by the determination 'to get out from under' the power within us can be released in the service of liberation just as possibly as it can be constrained by feelings of despair or alienation.

Social changes are not simply determined by structural conditions. Or by significant individuals with superior qualities of leadership or charisma or ruthlessness. The history of social movements is a history of people operating in the cracks of superstructures. Of using the energies generated at the margins of systems and organisations. Of exercising considerable imagination, critical thinking, subversion and undutiful behaviour to destabilise and de-construct the authority of the inevitable. All of them ways of 'taking back control' based on the inter-relationship between consciousness and courage, between theory and practice. Taking back control and joining with others in collective action to achieve change is at the root of concepts like participation and democracy. It finds its impetus in human agency and can transform people's lives. As well as transforming views about oneself.

All of which might sound enormously idealistic and highly abstract. But anyone who has experienced what it feels like to say No to different forms of oppression, or to engage creatively and seriously with others in a piece of social action concerned to get something established or something changed which more powerful interests have determined must continue, will know how contagious the release of human possibility can be. Even in defeat there is the further possibility of making progress, so long as the expectation of having collective rights to participation and exercising some control over one's material conditions are allowed to enter the collective consciousness. This is precisely what Freire has discussed as conscientisation in relation to education as the practice of freedom (Freire, 1972). It's what bell hooks refers to as 'transgression' in which the academy, the classroom, the neighbourhood drop in centre - anywhere in which learning is taking place - may not be paradise, but is a place 'where paradise can be created....With all its limitations (the classroom/ the neighbourhood/ the drop in centre) remains a location of possibility (where we can) collectively go beyond boundaries, to transgress'. According to bell hooks this is also education as the 'practice of freedom' (hooks 94 p207).

And just in case you imagine that the pursuit of social change from below, based on conscientisation, the development of critical intelligence and the courage to be undutiful in the interests of transgression, all implies a form of 'really useful knowledge' which is only related to the disciplines of politics, economics and social science, I would remind you of what the late great Audre Lorde had to say about making new knowledge and about developing our own ways of doing things. Even she might have stopped short at the prospect of 'aromatherapy for beginners' being regarded as having any political or emancipatory significance but she would have encouraged us to make use of every available opportunity to connect popular education to the self conscious struggle for popular liberation from oppressions. She was not talking simply about access and required us to remember that 'the masters tools will never dismantle the masters house' (Lorde, ed. Moraga and Anzaldua, 1981 p.98). In other words, that access to wider powers without some transformation of the systems of power will not be sufficient to deliver the kinds of changes we might envision. Thinking beyond conventional forms of wisdom and the alleged logic of present systems is a further variation on the theme of 'really useful knowledge' and is connected to what another black poet, June Jordan, has to say in relation to the importance of poetry, political consciousness and language. She says, 'good poetry and successful revolutions change our lives. (But) you cannot compose a good poem or wage a revolution without changing consciousness. And you cannot alter consciousness unless you attack the language that you share with your enemies and invent a language that you share with your allies' (Jordan, 1994 p70 -1). Part of the residual problem with liberal as distinct from radical approaches to the dilemmas posed by education for social change is the widespread assumption that what you need to do is 'modify your language' (and your appearance

and your dress code) to lull potential power holders into a false sense of security about your reasonableness and moderation. Even to change your language, so that it is 'less confrontational' i.e. less associated with unpopular world views like feminism, socialism or Marxism. The problem with calling Women's rights 'gender studies', or lesbianism 'sexual preference', or anti discrimination 'equal opportunities', or unemployment 'flexibility', or redundancy 'efficiency savings', or privatisation 'consumer choice', or education 'training', or democratic rights 'customer contracts' or client's charters', however, is that the modification of the language changes its meaning and its impact. It also means that you quickly forget the point at which you began to adopt the language of the enemy as a strategy to gain acceptance, with the intention of 'working from within'. It soon becomes 'second nature' to you, and the repertoire with which you then make sense of the world. Except that you are likely to be making sense of the world in a significantly altered way, as you become progressively wedded to the concepts and concerns of those whose interests might be very different to your own, and into which you have now become incorporated. 'Really useful knowledge' in this sense implies vigilance, imagination, courage and taking trouble to be free.

The ideas related to the notion of 'really useful knowledge' also offers us a way of thinking about adult education now, as a form of popular education for democracy, and in relation to debates about active citizenship and more widespread participation in decision making. Debates which might have relevance at a local level - to inform social action campaigns; in political movements of various kinds; as antidotes to the widespread domination of public life by white, middle class, able bodied men - but also to address the responsibilities implied in the protection of human rights, environmentalism and globalisation. In this sense I would recommend you to take a look at the report recently produced by the Women and Citizenship Research Group in association with the Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland called Women and Citizenship: Power, Participation and Choice (EOC, 1995).

The research starts with the reluctance of women to say they engage in politics, or at least Politics with a capital P - a reluctance which is widespread across Europe. Reluctance should not be read as ignorance or apathy however. It partly stems from constitutional arrangements and partly from historic - and patriarchal) mechanisms of exclusion. It partly implies a definition of what constitutes politics and which doesn't take account of, for example, community activism, campaigning, membership of voluntary organisations and pressure groups or social movements. It also stems from the ways in which power is mediated within communities by additional considerations of gender, age, ethnicity and the like. Frequently women have been required to subsume their interests as women to other loyalties which might be defined by others as 'more important'.

Citizenship is, by the way, one of those buzz words which can mean very different things to different people and needs to be used with caution.

The Tory government in Britain uses citizenship to preach ideologies of self help and self reliance and is intended to promote personal contributions to the common good. According to modern Conservatism, citizens rights are seen as being analogous to consumers rights, in ways that can be underwritten by public charters. Except that patients charters have done very little to guarantee an effective health system which responds quickly and appropriately when people are sick. Travellers charters don't make the trains run on time, or increase safety standards undermined by de-regulation, or address the imminent collapse of the transport infrastructure. Consumers charters haven't prevented fat cats from making enormous profits out of privatising public utilities or persuaded them to make personal contributions to the common good. Individualised complaints procedures, administered by quangos, don't compensate for taking power away from democratically elected local authorities or restricting trade union activities. Definitions of citizenship which require people to behave themselves and do what the state wants are not good reasons in themselves for promoting active citizenship.

The same problems emerge in adopting an uncritical enthusiasm for an 'individual rights' mentality. In Britain the pressure group Liberty (once the Council of Civil Liberties) retains an essentially liberal and libertarian attitude to protecting peoples rights, and is based on a philosophy - liberalism - which has got a lot more in common with Thatcherism than many people would like to imagine. Personally I cannot accept that an individual's right to participate in the production and dissemination of child pornography, for example, can simply be viewed as a matter of personal conscience or choice. Or that it's unfair to arrest sex tourists in Britain on the basis of what they get up to in the Philippines and Thailand. Discussions about rights which are expressed only in individual terms, or in relation to the concerns of specific groups, don't get us very far along the road when it comes to challenging structural oppressions like racism, imperialism and sexism.

The concerns of the Women and Citizenship research project are somewhat more modest. But extremely important. The main focus of the research is about the long exclusion of women from the sphere of legal and political rights, and from active participation in decision making bodies in the public sphere. A secondary focus deals with what might be the significance of women's greater inclusion. The report notes the absence of women in public life in Northern Ireland compared to men, and compared to the situation in Great Britain, which is in itself not very inspiring .The writers also consider the Republic of Ireland in which some changes for the better have occurred during the last twenty years. Most notably the election of Mary Robinson as President and increasing numbers of women in the Dail - 12% in 1994 as against 7.8% in 1989. (As in Britain - still some way to go, I would say). In discussing some of these concerns with women's groups of various kinds the report is able to make a number of recommendations which would give women more influence and more representation. These involve recommendations directed towards Womens organisations, towards political parties and politicians, and towards policy makers in the voluntary and statutory sectors. It is interesting to note the extent to which the recommendations deal with issues about power. And so far as the contribution

made by education is concerned, how important it is seen to be to develop content that is related to raising political, economic and feminist awareness, as well as developing the kinds of skills which can turn heightened awareness into effective practice. The main education recommendation, in fact, is to promote political education, based on what I would call 'really useful knowledge', with a view to increasing the direct participation of women in decision making and public life. In practice this would mean transforming the culture of existing political institutions and decision making bodies - not simply to make them more women friendly and reflective of Womens issues, but in order to reconstitute some of the assumptions about what counts as political concerns - from a women's point of view. This would provoke many more debates - and in turn policies - about environmental issues, community concerns, child care, women's employment rights, reproductive and health rights, and issues concerning violence against women, for example, than is currently on the agendas of most malestream political parties. People in the audience will have their own ideas about what else a more gender balanced agenda might include.

This then is just one example. The work packs currently being produced by the Popular Education for Democracy Project at the Department of Continuing Education in Leeds is another. Neither is a blueprint. Different circumstances and different cultural contexts require different responses no doubt. Except the underlying principle remains the same. As adult educators, community development workers, volunteers and community activists we are all cultural workers whose energies and services can be called upon, as particular kinds of resources, to be used in the interests (or as inhibitors) of political change. We are likely to have no greater insight into what might constitute emancipatory learning than people whose communities, and whose life very often, depends upon it. Certainly our role is not to direct or control the energies which are released - although we might want to lend solidarity and recognise commonalties where appropriate. Or express dissent. Certainly we all have significant oppressions of our own to be dealing with before we start thinking we can tell others what to do. But we ought to know about creating the kinds of learning spaces, and providing the kinds of content and learning opportunities, which enable groups of people facing oppressions and discrimination to identify what would be 'really useful knowledge' for them, in order to better understand their situations and to take action in pursuit of change. To turn theory into practice. As all of us in this room must also do.

Disclaiming theory in the pursuit of practicalities and 'rolling up the sleeves' to 'get things done' is a form of action without reflection. It sustains systems of oppression rather than acknowledging the complexities of how power and ideologies operate. It doesn't, in the end, do anyone we care about any favours. It's also bad faith.

Which brings me back to the point with which I began. Just because Bob Dole and Tony Blair and John Major are playing coy about the theories which inform their actions, it doesn't mean to say they haven't got any. They would be more honest - and in the end, be held in higher regard by those they want to persuade, if they took the trouble to acknowledge them.

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Community Development and Adult Education: Prospects for Change?

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Abstract

This article will look at the origins of community development and its role in addressing social issues such as poverty, unemployment and the unequal position of women. It will assess the part adult education plays in community development. Finally, it will consider if the current main trends in community development in Ireland succeeds in bringing about social change which is liberating rather than domesticating.

Introduction: Context

Ireland has changed enormously over the past four decades. The Programme for Economic Development introduced in 1958 by the then Taoiseach, Sean Lemass, endeavoured to bring Ireland into line with the current western thinking on economic development and the government established the Industrial Development Authority (IDA) (Lee, 1989: 344).

Ireland's situation was particularly interesting in that the modernisation of society ran well ahead of the industrialisation. British rule ensured that a modern state apparatus was in place together with an advanced financial system. In addition, the Catholic Church played a critical role in developing a modern educational system which attempted to ensure, among other issues, national literacy (Whelan, 1994: 4,5).

This industrialisation process seemed to transform the fortunes of the Irish people. Initially, it stemmed emigration, it provided well paid and plentiful jobs, it raised the standard of living by the normalisation of higher quality housework and relatively easy access to household appliances such as washing machines and vacuum cleaners. However, one of the unintended consequences was the increasing polarisation of the population, a deepening divide between urban and rural and between rich and poor.

By the mid 70s, the picture had altered and it became obvious that industrialisation marginalised a range of groups: unskilled workers, rendering them unemployable; small farmers on increasingly unviable farms; and people in low paid jobs, by reason of the high rate of taxation on the employee sector to pay for modernisation (O Cinneide and Walsh, 1990:326).

Kirby (1988) considers that the failure to find a model of economic development which moves towards a more equal society is the major cause of poverty (Kirby,1988:12). He links unemployment and poverty, and finds that poverty is rooted in powerlessness, in the experience of being insignificant in the overall order of things (Kirby, 1988: 12).

The failure of any serious action on unemployment, one of the outcomes of the inappropriate development and the subsequent recession of the 1980s, meant that people who were unemployed became more and more marginalised. People who were unemployed almost immediately became poor:

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> "...most people experienced a substantial fall in income during unemployment. Where benefit levels were close to reported earnings, this was frequently because these earnings were well below average, rather than because benefits were substantially above average" (Callan and Nolan, 1994:114).

Kirby (1988) critiques the government's role in employment. Ironically, Ireland is promoted as the most profitable industrial location in Europe. While TNCs availed of the generous inducements to settle, however short term, in Ireland, their high performance did not always translate into jobs (Kirby,1988:18).

Callan and Nolan (1994) conclude that the current policy on employment will not tackle the problem adequately. They maintain that people who are long term unemployed face a particularly bleak future, not only missing out in terms of education and health, but also being perceived as poorly motivated by employers (Callan and Nolan, 1994:115).

One of the ways of changing the direction that economic and social policy has dictated is the most recent trends in community development, fundamentally, a basic, human scale process which tries to address the problem of exclusion and marginalisation.

However, the origins of community development were more ambiguous and demonstrate a more questionable ethos.

Community Development - The Origins

Mezirow (1963) looks at the origins of community development and traces the directions it took from the beginning. He examines the experience of community development in various so-called developing countries, especially Pakistan from 1952-1961.

> "Community development has been ardently championed on every continent as the most practical means of translating the ideological promise of Western democracy into specific attitudes and behaviour change in the closed society of traditional village life" (Mezirow,1963:7).

This history is particularly interesting because of its unselfconscious ideological stance. The passage of time has allowed the examination of the assumptions which underpinned the process from its inception in 1948.

Rural peasants in the developing world were perceived as backward looking, conservative and village centred. Community development was seen as the route to transform these people, adapting them to life in a modern, industrialising, urban-based state. Community development was seen as the hope for the developing countries of Africa and Asia.

Mezirow (1963) saw community development as an ideology which evoked dedication and commitment from indigenous peoples. The term entered

the parlance in 1948 when the Cambridge Conference on African Administration designed it. It was a movement intended to foster a better standard of living for the whole community and the participation of the people in the whole community. It was concerned with people as agents of their own 'betterment'. As such, it was a substitution for the notion of 'mass education' (Mezirow, 1963:9).

The UN developed a definition encompassing economic and cultural dimensions.

> "This complex set of processes is...made up of two essential elements: the participation of the people themselves in efforts to improve their level of living with with as much reliance as possible on their own initiative; and the provision of technical and other services in ways which encourage initiative, self-help and mutual help and make these more effective. [It is] essentially both an educational and organisational process"

Mezirow (1963) says that community development was an attempt to bridge the gap between the ruling elite and the rural population. The basic premise of this concept of community development is that it fully supports the governments of developing countries in their move towards urbanisation and western style democracy. Thus, community development was a tool of the process of westernisation. Social change meant in essence, a change from a predominantly agricultural, uneducated, undeveloped state to a western democracy and life style.

Perspectives of Community Development

The United Nations definition of community development provided the basic philosophy which underpinned several schemes.

Further definitions link community development with education. The Murphy Report (1973) identified community development with one type of adult education:

> "Planned self-help in all matters relating to the material and human development of a particular section of the community is the essence of community development. The adult as a member of a community and through his (sic) involvement in its affairs can himself (sic) be a learner and at the same time be a source of encouragement to learn, to other members of his(sic) community."

Dempsey (1987) identifies some key factors which form a necessary part of the community development process:

- the unit of action is the community;
- leadership and initiative should come from the community itself;
- the principle of participation must be adhered to;
- community decisions must reflect the wishes of the community;
- a comprehensive approach should be attempted (Dempsey, 1987: 16,17).

Dempsey does not see social action as a part of community development. Social action programmes, she maintains, are often organised by radical groups in the community and they do not deal with the community as a whole.

> "The underlying assumption is that social problems of the disadvantaged, for example, inner city poor, itinerants (sic.), drop out alcoholics, are due to social injustice, inequities, oppression. The basic objectives while still based on change, as in community development, imply change in the power structure, the changing of institutions of power" (Dempsey, 1987: 20,21).

This perspective encapsulates a non-radical approach to development. It does not see the "disadvantaged" as a significant part of the community and it holds that the power structures are adequate and in no way responsible for the incidences of disadvantage. It also holds that the institutions of power can encompass enough change, without serious transformation.

Community Development and Social Change

Arensberg and Niehoff, (1971) study the concept of social change. After the 1945, social change centred around creating more stability and "a greater equality of sharing" and reducing "productivity differences." They speak in terms of industrialisation bringing about "great marvels of production" but unindustrialised countries, and unindustrialised pockets in developed countries, have not been "assimilated into the productive patterns" of industrialisation (Arensberg and Niehoff, 1971: 1).

This perspective of social change is primarily centred on enlisting people as the agents of their own modernisation. Industrialisation is viewed as the model of progress and civilisation and the voluntary co-operation of the people is an extremely efficient tool for bringing it about.

Freire (1972) sees this type of community development as domesticating. It creates passive citizens, people who are not questioning of the institutions of power. He maintains that modernisation benefits only the "metropolitan" society (Freire, 1972: 130) and by inference, creates a marginal sector. Non-radical community development is a repressive process, perpetuated by the ruling class.

Another perspective of social change was postulated by Saul Alinsky in Reveille for Radicals (1969). He poses the question "What is a Radical?" and answers that radicals are those who are completely identified with mankind (sic) that they share the pain, suffering and injustices of other human beings (Alinsky, 1969:15,16). Radicals believe in participative democracy and in what he calls "real equality of opportunity" (Alinsky, 1969: 17).

This discussion is interesting in that Arensberg and Niehoff and Alinsky wrote virtually contemporaneous accounts of the same theme. Yet they are polar opposites in that the first, Arensberg and Niehoff's account sees social

change as facilitating an objective concept: industrialisation, synonymous with progress, modernisation and development, while the second sees it in terms of people, first and foremost, as the arbiters of their own needs, many of which are not met by the model of development inherent in industrialisation. These opposing views encapsulate the tension that, to some extent, underpin the most recent discussion: social change which serves to domesticate and social change as a radical force for liberation.

This tension can be seen in some of the trends in Ireland since the 1960s.

Trends in Ireland

O Cinneide and Walsh (1990) identify four main trends in community development trends in Ireland since the 1960s. A common element would incorporate notions of self-determination and self-expression by ordinary people who belong to the one community.

Stemming from a report by O Cinneide in 1972, "The extent of poverty in Ireland."Awareness was raised about the real picture in relation to poverty. The government of the day appointed the National Committee on Pilot Schemes to Combat Poverty (NCPSCP) in 1973, and they adapted a radical programme of community action aimed at combating poverty. The approach was underscored by a belief that the powerlessness of poor communities would have to be addressed if poverty was to by tackled. The underlying philosophy of the Combat Poverty Agency strategy and the strategies of those who developed within that philosophy is radical social change (O Cinneide and Walsh, 1990:327-330).

Definition

Community Development is a term that has been applied widely to all kinds of activity which takes place in the community. Examples include a Tidy Towns project or a group water scheme. Commins (1985) and O'Cinneide and Walsh (1990) use a broad generic concept, which subsumes a number of models. A common element would incorporate notions of self-determination and self-expression by ordinary people who belong to the one community.

More recently, Kelleher and Whelan (1992) have worked out a definition that goes beyond the concept of individuals working in a group to meet their own needs. In their definition, they attempt to encompass a complex process and concept, whereby people are encouraged to take control of their lives and to develop their human potential. Through this process, people would collectively identify the needs of their community and work collectively to meet those needs. Crucially, the process

> "stresses the need to develop community awareness, engender group cohesiveness and promote self-reliance and collective action. This logically leads communities to seek changes at policy and institutional levels, often highlighting the need for the redistribution of society's resources" (Kelleher and Whelan,1992:1).

This definition attempts to draw several strands of a cycle together: reflection, action, analysis, research, reflection, action. While community development can be used as a form of social control, containing the population and preventing social unrest, the cycle, described above, ensures that community development remains self-aware. This self-awareness endeavours to prevent complacency, complicity and stagnation.

However, O Cinneide and Walsh are doubtful about the effectiveness of community development programmes as strategies for bringing about social change.

> "History provides little solace: Ireland has experienced great political changes in its recent history but none of it has been or could be attributed to community [development] methods. Why, then, should people who are powerless and deprived see community [development] as an alternative means of political change?"
> (O Cinneide and Walsh, 1990:333)

This criticism is central to those who are advocates on behalf of community development as an instrument of social change. Community development, as formulated by the UN, works at the level of maintaining the existing power structures. Radical trends in community development are committed to working towards change in the community. This change challenges the power structures and works towards the redistribution of resources.

Community development approaches always include the concept of participation, that is, participation in decisions and benefits at local level. There is another, further step: participation as a model of democracy.

The emergence of the radical trend in community development has highlighted the deficiencies in traditional models of democracy. Clientelism, endemic in the current representational model of democracy in Ireland, ensures that power is maintained in the hands of the politicians, who may have divided loyalties.

Collins (1993) asserts that the representational democracy has proved to be disempowering to marginalised groups and, in the current form, politicians can reasonably safely ignore these groups (Collins, 1993: 90).

This is supported by the findings of Hardiman and Whelan (1994) in their study, *Values and Social Change in Ireland*. They find that unemployed people are relatively uninvolved in the political process, "that they were not politically mobilised around a distinctive set of values that makes their experience of unemployment their dominant concern" (Hardiman and Whelan, 1994: 120). Significantly, unemployed people were no more uninvolved than other people from the same or similar class and background. Of the group, non-skilled manual workers, almost one in two felt politically impotent: they felt they could do nothing to oppose an unjust law (Hardiman and Whelan, 1994:130).

In addition, women are less likely to be interested or involved in mainstream politics than their European counterparts. This is attributed to their lower levels of participation in the paid labour force, to a considerable degree (Hardiman and Whelan, 1994:133).

This indicates that the political system, as it is currently instituted, fails to include significant groups in the process. Overall, a large proportion of unskilled workers, unemployed people and women, especially those engaged in work within the home, are disenfranchised by the system of representational democracy.

Participative Democracy

David Held (1987) examines a model of democracy which may change the power dynamics. Participative democracy is a model which addresses the issue of the distribution of power. He postulates it as a process which answers the needs of contemporary society. He says:

> "Individuals should be free and equal in the determination of the conditions of their own lives; that is, they should enjoy equal rights (and accordingly, equal obligations) in the specification of the framework which generates and limits the opportunities available to them, so long as they do not deploy this framework to negate the rights of others (Held,1987: 290).

He considers the question of participation and agrees with the argument that freedom from politics is and essential freedom. However, this is not incompatible with participative democracy. Rather it opens up the possibility of freedom of choice: citizens can choose to participate if they wish to (Held,1987: 292).

The question of equality is raised with regards to redistribution, especially the redistribution of productive property. Held maintains that consumption property is a matter of personal choice, but at least a minimum must be available for people to exercise their rights.

A right to the minimum is fundamentally different from a moral and legal right to ownership.

> "A choice in favour of the standard rights of ownership is a choice against political equality" (Held, 1987: 293,294).

If political equality is a moral right, then the way in which productive resources are distributed has to be examined closely.

> "Recognition of the necessity to minimise inequality in the ownership and control of the means of production in fundamental to the possibility of an open, unbiased political agenda. Without clear restriction on private ownership a necessary condition of democracy cannot be met (Held, 1987:294).

This model of democracy, which has equality at its centre, is a commitment to reducing the privileges of the privileged so that great pockets of people are not relegated to a permanent subordinate position, be they women, unemployed people, people on low incomes, travellers or people with disabilities.

The new wave of community development incorporates this radical view of democracy and politics:

> "This logically leads communities to seek changes at policy and institutional levels, often highlighting the need for the redistribution of society's resources" (Kelleher and Whelan, 1992:1).

An essential element which transforms community development into a radical movement for social change is adult education. This will be examined in detail in the next section.

Education

> "In educational matters, there is an official transcript but there is also a separate transcript of practice. Quiet capitulation, moral acquiescence prevails, but I ask, where in the world have patriarchy or authoritarianism as personality traits, disappeared by a quiet evolution rather than by being named, acknowledged and then, by democratic decision, abandoned?" (Higgins, 1992: Radio lecture).

Very significant inequalities persist in the educational system in spite of the apparent equal opportunities provision.

Kathleen Lynch (1989), in *The Hidden Curriculum,* definitively demonstrates that the formal educational system, as it is currently organised, plays a crucial role in reproduction. The educational system is mainly concerned with the provision of equal opportunity. Lynch points out that provision and consumption are not co-terminous, and shows that provision of equal opportunity does not ensure that everyone can avail of the provision (Lynch, 1989: 126,127). In addition, the consumption of education is increasingly important as a route to the labour market (Lynch, 1989:124,127). Credentialised education is a vital determinant of status and power (Lynch, 1989:120,121).

Drudy and Lynch (1993) show that while expenditure on education has increased substantially since the 1960s, it has not managed to eliminate educational inequality. Working class people have improved their educational situation in absolute terms, overall, they have not gained any real advantage in relative terms (Drudy and Lynch, 1993: 146).

Elsewhere, Lynch proposes that those who benefit most from the educational system in terms of profession, status and power, are middle class men (Lynch, 1991:4).

Thus, the two major marginal groups, women and working class people, are not served adequately by the formal educational system. Attempts to redress the deficits have not succeeded yet.

Adult Education.

Lynch holds that the unequal outcomes can be addressed in some way by adult education.

Firstly, adult education can offer credentials to unemployed people to offset social class inequalities. Adult education can enable them to enter the labour market by transferring work skills (Lynch, 1991:5).

Secondly, adult education is also about empowerment and resistance, especially among those who have been disempowered by the social, economic and educational systems. It is a subtle process, whereby people become aware of their oppression and they build the capacity to overcome the oppression (Lynch, 1991:7).

Central to the practice of adult education is the ideology of the initiators of it. Allman and Wallis are clear that adult educators must have a subjective desire to create a more just world, they must have vision and must have the skills and "strategies to enable a 'critical mass' of humanity to engage in the achievement of social justice" (Allman and Wallis.1995: 19/18). Adult education is quite distinctive in its approach in that it aims to do substantially more than simply impart information to participants.

All forms of education rest on theories of what it means to be human and on the nature and origin of knowledge. Adult education recognises the potential in humanity for growth and development and therefore the type of knowledge it engages with is based on that assumption.

There are three different types of knowledge or ways of getting to know the world (Bassett, Brady, Fleming and Inglis, 1989 :27).

Technical knowledge which includes science and medicine.

Practical knowledge includes the study of history, English literature and psychology.

Critical reflection centres on learning to reason and reflect about life and the society and culture in which we live. "Freedom is sought from the forces which limit the range of options or choices we can make" and which "limit the amount of control people have over their lives" (Bassett et al., 1989:28).

This is emancipatory learning, learning for perspective transformation "becoming aware through discussion and reflection of how one's attitudes and values are developed" (Bassett et al., 1989:30-31).

Critical intelligence is the most basic ingredient of radical adult education (Allman and Wallis, 1995: 18).

Adult Education is centrally concerned with change. Change is mediated through all levels of education, technical, practical and critical reflection. The adult education approach facilitates the emancipatory dimension of the process, making the imparting of skills and competences an opportunity for critical reflection as well as the acquisition of techniques or knowledge.

Emancipatory Learning

Adult education provides the opportunity to participants to appraise their attitudes and values. This appraisal questions the fundamental assumptions and expectations with which they live their lives.

> "This kind of learning is achieved by the learner becoming aware, through self-reflection, of the genesis of attitudes and ways of interpreting the world. It leads to a freeing of the present from the control of the past, a freeing of ideologically imprisoned consciousness" (Fleming, 1984: 31).

There are several terms used in the context of emancipatory learning: critical reflection, conscientization and consciousness raising. The distinctions that are made between them are as follows.

Critical reflection is an instrument of the development of a critical awareness of the ideologies which underpin attitudes and values.

> "Critical reflection centres on learning to reason and reflect about life and the society and culture in which we live. Freedom is sought from the forces which limit the range of options or choices we can make" and which "limit the amount of control people have over their lives." (Bassett et al., 1989:28).

Conscientisation is the critical awareness and impetus to act that comes from insight into one's own oppression.

> "The term 'conscientisation' refers to the learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality"(Freire, 1972: 15).

Consciousness raising centres around the same theme as conscientisation, with particular application to women and their oppression in a patriarchal society.

> "Consciousness raising is a way for women to analyse their condition, develop new theory and plan action. Conceptually, through this process, one comes to see that what was thought to be an individual problem is instead a social or political problem requiring a collective solution. Consciousness raising groups developed the slogan "the personal is political" (Ryan, 1992: 167).

Critical reflection is mainly a cognitive process. Conscientisation and consciousness raising are primarily experiential: emotional, psychological and cognitive processes.

All of the concepts comprise emancipatory learning, learning which facilitates the raising of awareness, the impetus to act and the capacity to reflect on the action. The whole process is developmental. It moves the learner on to another level of being, as the agent of her or his own life, lived in a society which s/he participated in shaping.

Mezirow identified perspective transformation in a study of a group of women who re-entered formal education. This is a phenomenon which is witness by adult educators and participants in adult education. It is an enormously significant experience. It changes everything in a fundamental way.

In Connolly (1989), a report on a Women's Studies series of classes in daytime adult education, participants described themselves as deeply moved by the experience. She found that the roles and lifestyles of the women who participated in the classes suddenly became problematic: they started to question the most basic of their behaviour as women. The questions yielded answers that were sometimes unpalatable. It compelled them to look at themselves as enablers of the process of their own oppression, at their intimate relationships and at their relationship with society (Connolly, 1989: 20).

Hart (1990) describes the process of consciousness raising as pivoting around an analysis of oppression, where the oppressed share and identify the experience of oppression. It is a process where social membership is reclaimed and that process passes through the actual experience of power on an individual basis involving a theoretical grasp of power as it operated as a social reality and as a way of taking action that is ultimately emancipatory (Hart, 1990: 70,71).

Kathleen Weiler (1991) compares women's consciousness raising groups and Freire's concept of conscientisation. Women's consciousness raising groups began to form in the United States in the late 1960s, almost spontaneously, parallel to the civil rights and new left movements. The objective of the consciousness raising groups was to apply the demands for justice and equality to themselves as women. Consciousness raising focused on collective political change. She continues:

> "Consciousness raising shared the assumptions of earlier revolutionary trends that understanding and theoretical analysis were the first steps to revolutionary change, and that neither was adequate alone; theory and practice were intertwined as praxis" (Weiler, 1991:458).

Lovett (1988) raises the question of whether adult educators are major actors in the process of social change or if they are merely "decked out in resplendent new garments" (Lovett, 1988: 145). He assesses that in his experience, adult educators have failed to initiate or sustain a radical movement

for social change. He does not attribute this failure to lack of direction on the part of adult educators. Rather, it comes from the struggle to resolve the basic contradiction in the objectives of adult education and community action.

Firstly, there is the need to involve people in the design and implementation of their own educational needs. The second factor is the premise that adult and community education has a role to play in social change. The conflict arises when people want to partake in the formal education provision which had at least some influence in excluding them in the first instance. In addition, he also finds that:

> "A concern with personal growth and development was apparently in conflict with an emphasis on collective growth and development" (Lovett, 1988: 148).

This has not been the experience of all adult educators.

Hamilton (1992), in a study of Freire's work in Latin America and Horton's work in the Highlander Center in Tennessee, finds that:

> "Generally, radical approaches to adult education and community development serve a useful function in countries with entrenched institutional structures" (Hamilton, 1992:24).

Hamilton (1992) focuses on countries with "entrenched institutional structures" and estimates that community development, underpinned with adult education, are successful in challenging the causes of exclusion.

Conclusion

These two findings are supported by the experience in adult education. Lovett's position, ie, that personal development supersedes collective development, is the outcome of personal development focused programmes which are not underpinned by emancipatory learning. The participants' needs are met on an individual basis without being placed in the social and political context. Additionally, the adult educators are not facilitating the process of emancipatory learning.

Women who are oppressed in a uniquely personal, political and social way identify their need for a particular, narrowly-focused personal development programme to overcome the personal powerlessness endemic to their experience in this patriarchal, capitalist society. However, some do not make the transition from personal empowerment to collective action.

When the emancipatory learning process is foremost, the outcomes are different. The role of adult educators in this context, is to facilitate the process. The adult educators have to subscribe to the full meaning of adult education. Their role is ultimately to bring about emancipatory

social change. When the adult educators fully understand this through their own emancipatory learning, then they can implement it.

Community development without the essential element of emancipatory learning domesticates the activists and subverts the possibility of radical social change. Emancipatory learning is mediated through the agency of adult educators who have undergone an emancipatory learning process,themselves.

Similarly, adult education without the conduit of community development remains located in the personal. Emancipatory learning provides the impetus to action but not the collectivity. Political and social action is implicitly a collective activity. Adult education acts through it, informing it in the process. Adult education and community development are interdependent: each has a vital role to play in the implementation of the other's principles. Community development not informed by adult education remains domesticating and hierarchical. Adult education without community development stays personal, isolated and socially less powerful. Together, they combine to create an emancipatory model of collective action. This model will ultimately underpin an equal and just society.

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The Future of Adult Education: Learning Towards a New Democracy

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Keynote Address delivered at AONTAS Annual Conference "Into the Future: A Response to the White Paper" Athlone, June 14, 1995.

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Adult educators have given a considerable amount of time and energy over the past five years to preparing for the White Paper, Charting our Education Future. The State has this ability to set the agenda for our discussions and deliberations but as a major statement of policy and a framework for the future development of adult education the paper deserves a considered response.

What I would like to do is explore one or two ideas that I think are central to this task. These thoughts are meant neither as the only ones worth considering nor as a definitive and final position but rather as thoughts in search of dialogue.

There will be three parts to this task:

1. A critique of the white paper, the negative
2. A closer look at what is implied by this critique, the positive
3. Adult education: A future role in a democracy of free citizens

1. A Critique of the White Paper

The White Paper will be looked at from four different and critical perspectives. Firstly, the illustrations/photographs deserve attention. The way the document was launched also needs to be analysed because embedded in the process is the deeply held anti-democratic stance of politics and bureaucracy. The philosophy of the document and its adequacy as a foundation for adult education is briefly examined. Finally, the Enterprise Culture, which was so central to the thinking of the Green Paper[2] will be identified as even more central to the thinking of this document. But it is now not called the enterprise culture. The language used always hides more than it reveals!

1. The Photographs

The Minister for Education, Niamh Breathnach, in launching this White Paper spoke about how the philosophy of education was "clearly outlined at the beginning of the document" and everything else followed. But its philosophy is embedded in more subtle ways in the photographs chosen to illustrate the publication.

The document is well illustrated. There are pictures in every chapter, all related to the subject matter of that chapter. A picture of a primary school class in the section in primary education, etc.

The picture illustrating the chapter on The Teaching Profession (p.120) is a teacher doing her teaching in the library!

The picture in the chapter on The Role of Parents (p. 142) has the same child, the same book just a different track suit!

The adult education photograph (p. 84) has the same teacher, in the same library, with the same parent, with the same books in the back-

[2] Education for a Changing World (Dublin Stationary Office, 1992).

ground. This is not a parent teacher meeting. This is the adult education photograph!

Irrespective of the Government's philosophy of education outlined in the first chapter of the report these pictures are carriers of philosophy too. Note how the teacher sits on a higher chair. So much for equality! The books being read by the adult learner and those on the shelves are children's books. This is not adult education as it is thought about or practiced. It is in fact a fundamental misunderstanding of both the theory and the practice of adult education. Adult literacy, adult basic education, creative writing, second chance and daytime provision are not places where adults learn to read children's books.

Maybe this is just a mistake. Some public relations firm just got the pictures wrong. It is clear that the pictures undermine the text.

But there is more than this to the pictures. There is only one photograph in the body of the report without people. It is a beautifully taken night-time shot of the historic building in which the Department of Education is located in Marlborough St. (p.182). It illustrates the section on The Inspectorate of the Department. Bureaucracy is the only part of the educational system which does not portray itself with a human face.

All the photographs of people are of people doing something. Teachers are teaching, parents are parenting and even teaching, children are learning or playing, lecturers are lecturing, etc. There is only one photograph where the people in it are not doing anything at all. The ten men representing the Department of Education are just there. (p 190) More questions surface here about equality, about gender and what do these men do? When bureaucracy does have a human face this is it. One student in a class remarked that even the grandfather clock is masculine!

Pictures are our symbolic representations of ourselves and an organisation that presents itself in such an unreflective way is obviously in a weak position to articulate a vision of education.

2. The Launch

Charting our Education Future was launched on April 12, 1995 and the next day a Government Notice in The Irish Times announced that

1. A limited number of typescript copies are available
2. The printed version will be widely distributed after Easter (April 16) and
3 The White Paper will be published soon![3]

So the message for the nation was that the Government's proposals would be

1. Out in time for the teachers conferences. (Easter was April 16)
2. With just typed copies (advance copies/pre-publication copies) for journalists and other special people.

[3] The Irish Times April 13,1995

So for almost a month you could get a copy if you were one of the special people! The procedure was to do the P.R. first, get the correct spin on the story and only then have the full version in circulation.

What precisely is the problem with this?

Special people pose a problem in a democracy. There are not supposed to be special people in a democracy. Surely this was similar to how the Beef Tribunal Report was leaked, launched, interpreted, distributed and published? We do need to take a closer look at how we operate a democracy!

Maybe I'm going too far again but I'm stuck on the idea that it was something to do with the existence of special people which sparked off the Beef Tribunal in the first place. Some of the special people were there defending their interests. Who would represent the Common Good? The inability of the Attorney General to do this was a symptom of the demise of the common good as defined in our current version of democracy.

So in the existence of special people whose interests are paramount serious questions are posed for our democracy in way the White Paper was launched.

3. The Philosophy

The first chapter of the White Paper on philosophy has some interesting things to say about equality, pluralism, tolerance, civil rights and about the role of education in the economy.

But to assume that a philosophy of education outlined for children is also appropriate for adults is to again fundamentally misunderstand adult education as a field of theory and practice. It is neither compatible with the theory nor the practice.

It may be appropriate, as this report says, [pg.10], to teach children respect for and appreciation of the values which have traditionally shaped our society and culture. Indeed we must, in order to survive, hand on our values, stories, history, knowledge, culture and technologies but the key role for the learning adult is to take a less respectful and more critical look at what we have been taught. It is appropriate for adults to be critical and active remakers of culture and society.

Having a critical look at the frames of reference which we were taught and in which we think, feel, interpret and act is the most important kind of adult learning. Being able to identify from where we got these frames of reference, being able to critique them, adjust them, find new and more adequate ones if necessary, and act out of them is the most significant kind of adult learning.[4]

[4] Jack Mezirow, Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning (London Jossey -Bass, 1991)

To outline a philosophy of education without making reference to this unique adult dimension is to misunderstand not only adult education but the nature of adulthood and adult learning. If it's all as the Minister said, built on getting the philosophy right, then what happens when it gets it wrong?

If there is this lack of clarity about what adult education is then how does this surface in public policy and practice? There are two examples of this that come to mind, and probably many more that could be added to this list.

1. The qualification required to become a recognised adult educator, e.g. Adult Education Organiser, is the same qualification required to become a secondary school teacher. Adult education wants rid of this confused policy of Memorandum V7. All attempts to put in place an effective second chance provision such as VTOS will inevitably be undermined if it is seen that the only qualified adult educators are those who are trained to teach children.

2. Without this vision of what adult learning really involves adult education becomes a sort of remedy for what was missed the first time on the educational merry-go-round. The implication of the White Paper is that anything that is not remedial is a luxury and not essential. There has to be an acceptance that lifelong learning is not just a catch-up on lost or missed opportunities and not only justifiable as good for getting a job. It is the essential precondition for the health of our culture, the development of citizenship and the survival of democracy.

4 The Enterprise Culture

Let me briefly revisit the Green Paper which was preoccupied with the Enterprise Culture. All education was for enterprise. There is now no mention of enterprise culture in the White Paper. But it is everywhere. In six of the nine policy points made in the adult education section reference is made to jobs, skills, training, competencies, economic growth, vocational training. The word enterprise is gone only to surface everywhere.

Adult education is of course for jobs, competence and training but this appallingly narrow vision of its possibilities leads one to wonder how can we get the point across that there is more. The remainder of this paper will focus on one aspect of what is missing.

The reason I have spent so much time critiquing the document is because my thesis is implied in this critique. In the remainder of this paper I want to talk about the concept of democracy which I identified earlier as problematic. By outlining a concept of democracy I will be in a position to return to adult education with an agenda which includes education for participatory citizenship in a strong democracy. This is part of what is missing in the White Paper.

Dialogic Participatory Democracy

In the past decade socialism has been in retreat and not just in Eastern Europe. Radicals of the Left are in retreat. The Right has become triumphant, proclaiming, in Fukuyama's words 'the end of history.' It's all over. The West has won and liberal democracy has lasted the pace and run out of competitors. Now the Right is radical and rampantly changing the economic and political landscape. The Left is without a mission.

But the triumphalism of the Right and of liberal democracy is not well founded.[5] I believe that liberal democracy too is in trouble and is far from being secure and justified in its triumphalism. The representative democracy, the version of democracy we have, has become a vehicle for representing special interest groups. We have a politics of special interests. You have only to name the social partners to see this. In order to be a social partner and have a say in economic policy one must have a job. Women in the home are not social partners. Neither are the unemployed, older people, adolescents, students, and so on. They get representation but not participation. For these groups representative democracy prevents participation.

Politics is not supposed to be the conduct of public affairs for private or sectarian advantage. It is not supposed to promote individual liberty more than it secures public justice.

What am I proposing then as an alternative to this problematic representative democracy?

I am proposing a form of politics which is dialogic and participatory. I'm not suggesting just discussion and consultations as these usually leave power structures unchanged. The Church in the reforms of Vatican II proposed more participation. Sing louder, shake hands, make the responses in English. But the exercise of power became even more centralised and authoritarian. Participation is something more than singing louder, or voting more often, or even being asked your opinion. Politics has become what politicians do; what citizens do is vote for the politicians. In a dialogic participatory democracy politics is what citizens do.

Instead of taking people to Dublin Castle for consultations which do not change the representative nature of the process of writing this White Paper, how interesting it would be if we could, with the Government, write this chapter on adult education together. How exciting! At least we would have got the pictures right. This is a good time to begin outlining an Adult Education Bill.

The strong democracy that I am proposing addresses the fundamental question of politics. What shall we do when something has to be done that affects us all, we wish to be reasonable, yet we disagree on what we want to achieve and how to achieve it and are without ready-made solu-

[5] Anthony Giddens, Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics (Cambridge: Polity, 1994)

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tions apart from our own attempts to be reasonable? Could this also be a useful way of looking at community development?

Strong democracy is :

> politics in the participatory mode where conflict is resolved in the absence of an independent ground through a participatory process of ongoing, proximate self-legislation and the creation of a political community capable of transforming dependent, private individuals into free citizens and partial and private interests into public goods.[6]

This kind of democracy creates a public capable of reasonable public deliberation and decision, a public capable of transforming the actions of individuals so they will be animated by regard for common ends.

Rather than vote for this constitutional amendment or against it, this political party or another, this presidential candidate or someone else, this model of democracy attempts to define voting and decision making in a different way.

Voting suggests a group in a cafeteria bargaining about what they can buy as a group that will suit their individual tastes. Strong democratic politics

> suggests a group of men in a cafeteria contriving new menus, inventing new recipes, and experimenting with new diets in an effort to create a public taste that they can all share and that will supersede the conflicting private tastes about which they once tried to strike bargains.[7]

Dialogic participatory democracy is how I would define community. John Dewey said something similar when he wrote:

> Democracy is more than a form of Government; it is primarily a mode of Democracy is not an alternative form to other principles of associated life. It is the idea of community itself[8] ...
>
> [It is] a name for a life of free and enriching communion.[9]

In a representative democracy to exercise the franchise is unfortunately to renounce it. The representative principle steals from individuals the ultimate responsibility for their values, beliefs and actions. Surely, the Area Based Partnerships would be totally different if they were participatory rather than representative?

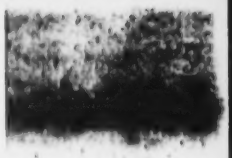
My critique of the White Paper is really a critique of the form of representative democracy we have. In its place I have suggested a change in the way we make political decisions in our society.

6 Benjamin R. Barber, Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age (London: University of California Press, 1984)

7 Barber, p. 137

8 John Dewey, Democracy and Education (London: Macmillan, 1916), p.87

9 John Dewey, The Public and its Problems (Chicago: Swallow Press,1927), p148.



You could object to this proposal saying:

> Representative democracy is the best we've got, it may not be perfect, it does work and in any case all this participation and dialogue is not practical.
>
> Show me somewhere in the world where it has been tried and working.
>
> Anyway, what has all this got to do with adult education?

So it's not practical. Let me quote Thomas Jefferson:

> I know of no safe depository of the ultimate power of the society but the people themselves, and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion.

Adult Education: For Dialogic Participatory Learning

The two objections, which ask if there are any examples of where this form of democracy is in operation and whether this form of democracy has anything to do with adult education, I will address together.

Some people wonder if adult education has a vision. It has. And it is linked to the concept of democracy I have been outlining. Adult learning is participatory, critically reflexive, open to new ideas and changing frames of reference. It has a vision of learners engaged in dialogic participatory discourse, collectively seeking ways of changing themselves and society so that all systems, organisations and individuals respond to the needs of others.

The ideas I am proposing here are not new. If you use different language you can very quickly hear the connections with Jack Mezirow's Theory of Transformative Learning. He says the most significant kind of learning takes place through a process of collaborative discourse. Echoes of dialogic participation.

Paulo Freire says teachers of adults "must be revolutionary - that is to say, dialogical....Where the teacher and student teach and learn."[10]

The experience of many who have been involved in adult education is close if not the same as the dialogic participatory democracy that I have been describing. Let me just give two examples. The first is the self-help tradition and the other is adult education for personal development.

[10] Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (New York Seabury, 1972) p. 74

The Self-help Movement

The self-help movement comprises all those groups which have met for the purpose of mutual support in the face of a particular social problem. Alcoholics anonymous is an example, but so too are mother and toddler groups, ecological pressure groups, womens' groups and daytime education, including NOW and Horizon programmes. Today more people belong to self-help groups than to political parties. These groups are about dialogue and participation. They are democratic. They open up spaces for public dialogue about issues which would not previously be discussed. They force into the discursive domain aspects of social conduct that previously went undiscussed or were settled by traditional solutions - representative politics or the church. They help contest official definitions of things and see the creative possibility of conflict.

Many of these self-help groups therefore have an intrinsic connection with the strong democracy I have been talking about. The feminist movement problematised female and male sexual identity through making them matters of public debate. They sustain alternative models of democracy to the representative democracy of the state. Many inhibit fixed hierarchies and set out to create the maximum of non-hierarchical discursive space for their members. They are the model at community level a model of the strong democracy I am proposing should exist at a social level.

The democratic system in which we live has no way of taking on board the experience of these movements. The political parties of the vested interests and their lobbyists can find no way of including the alternative model of democracy found in these organisations. Mary Robinson was voted into office by many of these groups and movements. They find a voice in her egalitarian and symbolic way of constantly linking with them. Her Presidency is in fact the only political institution in the state which systematically represents and validates this alternative dialogic participatory democracy.

So the self-help movement in all its forms is a counter experience to the representative democracy of the state.

Personal Development

Dialogic participatory democracy is also modelled in personal development courses. This is the single biggest area in the field of adult education. Maynooth extra mural programme with 2,500 students provides personal development or counselling courses for the most of these. Many providers throughout the country provide similar courses. I believe that on these courses participants learn how to change their personal relationships. They become more egalitarian, more participatory, more democratic. It is difficult to do a personal development course without changing the way one relates to others and the change is one where things are more equal, more people are considered in decision making and all members of a family have more say and control over the outcome.

It is not possible to have so many people doing these courses, reconstituting their personal relationships in a more dialogic and participatory mode without this having a profound impact on a community, a society and a political system which is the contradiction of this new mode! Personal development does help people seek more dialogic and participatory ways of working and of organising their family life. Why should politics be immune. Adult education has known this for some time. Feminism has known this too when it says "the personal is political"

It is no wonder then that the state will have difficulty understanding what we are about. It has a vested interest in not knowing. What we are about is the redefining of democracy. Those who set themselves up as guardians of the educational system will have a vested interest in not looking too closely at what we are doing because the price to be paid is to take a close look at their own non-dialogical and non-participatory practices.

The Future

Because adult education is a critique of the educational system in general this does not mean that we are less interested in involving ourselves in policy decisions or institutionalising worthwhile ideas. Because we frequently take this critical stance we could be accused, and maybe found guilty, of being unwilling to get our hands dirty in the nitty gritty task of forming public policy and supporting organisational reform.

We are not ourselves above critique and maybe this is a good opportunity to name at least one area where we do not act decisively and coherently. There will be reform of the VECs. There will be new Education Boards. There will be a Further Education Authority. What part do we want to play in these? Do we want them to become statutory providers of adult education? How would we like to relate to these new structures? The teachers' unions, parents' councils, youth organisations and the bishops will have well worked out positions. What will ours be? I would like to be part of the discussions concerning the question of structures which the White Paper says is in need of urgent examination.

In the interest of provoking a discussion [Oh! I forgot - a dialogic participatory discourse] let me conclude with a number of concrete suggestions as a starting point for a chapter on the White Paper.

I suggest a Charter of Learners' Rights as a starting point for drawing up an Adult Education Bill which might say some of the following.

1. Lifelong adult learning is a precondition for the strength and survival of democracy.
2. All adults have a lifelong right to learn.
3. These two principles will guide all provision. [Rather than the narrow vision of education being remedial, for literacy or job skills training]

4. 1% of the education budget will be allocated for adult education. Funding will cease to be small, sudden, sharp and become more predictable and accessible especially to small local providers.
5. Education Boards and VECs will be statutory providers of adult education.
6. All learners will be accommodated in adult-appropriate and adult-controlled buildings with security of tenure.
7. Priority will be given to the learning needs of the disadvantaged.
8. All discriminations against women's participation will be eliminated.
9. Adult educators will be qualified and trained appropriately, i.e. as adult educators.
10. A progression in training will be available to adults who wish to move either into course organisation and provision or who wish to study for academic qualifications. All learning will be capable of being certified, if required, and be part of an integrated provision of accreditation. [There is not a great deal to say for an adult education provision which helps people to think differently if it does not also help them to learn how to act, organise and implement their new ideas and change society.]
11. Adult education will have in the Department of Education a section of its own and not be seen as part of Further Education or an add on to the FAS provision.

The Aontas Report For Adults Only[11] and the report by Chris Mulvey[12], on Daytime Education have many ideas about what should be included in public policy. Chris Mulvey rightly sees daytime programmes as "serious and real providers of educational opportunities....[with the] potential to mobilise Irish people for active citizenship and generate creative solutions to social problems." There is more vision in this one sentence than in the chapter on adult education.

Søren Ehlers, talking about the Danish experience, at this Aontas conference says:

> Democracy can never be guaranteed. It is not a system to be implemented,but a way of life that can be learned. It is a mindset which each new generation must be taught. Therefore, adult general education constitutes the backbone of a democracy....
>
> Who then dare suggest that funds for adult general education be cut or removed? That would be tantamount to stating a preference for undermining democracy.[13]

Whatever our way of critiquing the White Paper and there are many ways of doing this the onus is, I believe, on us to again and again clearly outline a vision of what we mean by adult learning and adult education. And also to say clearly what we want to see incorporated into a statement of public policy. Because, like it or not, the endpoint of all this discussion will be a legislative framework within which we will operate as adult educators for some time.

[11] Bassett, Brady, Fleming & Inglis, For Adults Only: A Case for Adult Education in Ireland (Dublin: Aontas, 1989).

[12] Chris Mulvey, The Support and Development of Voluntary Daytime Education Groups in Ireland (Dublin: Aontas, 1994).

[13] Soren Ehlers, "Examples of Innovation in Danish Adult and Continuing Education: Six Case Studies" (Copenhagen: Royal Danish School of Educational Studies, 1995).

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Participation and Rural Voluntary Organisations in Ireland: a Case Study

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Abstract:

Participatory democracy has gained widespread currency in development debates worldwide. The terms inclusiveness and participation have emerged as central concepts to redress problems of poverty and powerlessness experienced by sectors of the population who are excluded, marginalised and disadvantaged. This paper investigates the nature of participation in the context of rural voluntary organisations in Ireland. It begins with a brief historical overview of the roles played by such organisations in the earlier part of this century and goes on to consider the challenges facing one such organisation, Macra na Feirme as it grapples with external changes in society as a whole and internal challenges to its viability. While identifying the constraints and opportunities facing Macra na Feirme the paper raises a number of seminal issues pertaining to the differing interpretations of participation. It considers the implications of participative perspectives that seek to promote empowerment and democracy and contrasts these with perspectives that seek only to utilise participation as a merely more efficient way to harness local energy to improve programme delivery with little commitment to the broader issues of the redistribution of power and resources.

Introduction

Voluntary organisations have been a significant element of the development infrastructure in rural Ireland at least since the end of the 19th century. Such organisations have focused on issues ranging from agricultural development, to sport, education, cultural identity, community theatre, social service and health provision. The rural community in particular tended to create and support voluntary endeavour either in response to the feeble statutory or private sector provision or out of a deep, if poorly analysed, distrust of such (statutory) provision as was to hand.

Many of those organisations embodied varied dosages of rural fundamentalism, nationalism, Catholicism and sexism. Whatever the combination or proportion of each of these traits, when combined with high levels of enthusiasm, the overriding character of such organisations was one of radical conservatism. They were primarily concerned with maintaining and preserving the social order and with resisting any threat to the normal way of things. The late Canon Hayes, founder of Muintir Na Tire, perhaps provides the best insight - albeit unwittingly - into this aspect of these organisations when, after a visit to Rome he remarked:

> "I left behind me a kind man, a human man, a man with the grace of God shining through his eyes; and I carried with me a mental picture which I feel will serve me for many a day. I feel a better man through meeting that noble, human Mussolini"
> (Rynne, 1960, p.101).

Prior to the resurgence of an overt feminist movement in the late 1960's the two main women's organisations were the Irish Countrywomen's

Association (ICA) and the Irish Housewives Association (IHA). Founded in 1910 and 1942 respectively both were concerned with improving the standard of living and quality of life in an Ireland which faced major economic, health and social difficulties. Some argue that the conservative social and political climate of the times constrained the activities of these organisations.

While the ICA and IHA encouraged women to play an active part in their communities they had to exercise caution when pursuing what could be construed as a political agenda. The IHA's networking activities with other women's organisations at home and abroad earned it the reputation of being "pink". In relation to social issues the clearly demarcated roles for men and women was staunchly guarded.

The Vocational Commission whose report ensued in the Vocational Education Act and the establishment of the Vocational Education Committees asserted:

> "The case of the home and of children presupposes the knowledge of housewifery including cookery, laundry, sewing, nursing, hygiene and sanitation and in rural homes many other duties such as poultry keeping, dairying and gardening fall to the lot of women. Owing to the essential part which the home plays in the life of the nation it is obvious that the domestic sciences should occupy a foremost place in the educational curriculum and that all girls should receive an adequate training in the household crafts on which their happiness and welfare and that of many others will so largely depend in later years" (Toner, 1955, p.74).

Hilda Tweedy, founder of the IHA highlights numerous incidents in which the "sanctity of the home" and "the home as the place for women" were evoked to challenge what she describes as "common sense suggestions" regarding ways to improve the health of children and ensure adequate food supplies for the most vulnerable members of the population. While it is debatable whether either organisations could do much to directly challenge the gender based social order of the times what is certain is that other community based groups did not even contemplate such a role.

Macra na Feirme was established in the mid 1940's as an organisation aiming at the educational, personal and social development of young farmers and rural people. The organisation emerged within the "strong farming" zone of East Munster and South Leinster which had already been the cradle of most of the other rural voluntary and farming organisations - most notably the Co-op Movement, Muintir na Tire, the Gaelic Athletic Association and subsequently, the Irish Farmer's Association and the Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association.

From the outset the organisation was concerned to offset the constraints of farming and rural life for young people confronted generally with limited economic opportunities, seriously constrained by problems such as distance from and access to urban centres and psychologically and socially subordinated within rigid family and community structures. The narrowness of the social space provided to this population is a recurring theme in the drama and literature of the period, perhaps most eloquently captured by Patrick Kavanagh:

> "Like the afterbirth of a cow stretched on a branch in the wind
> Life dried in the veins of those women and men:
> The grey and grief and unlove,
> The bones in the backs of their hands,
> And the Chapel pressing its low ceiling over them"
> (Kavanagh, 1972:45).

Whatever the effectiveness and contribution of organisations such as Macra na Feirme in addressing significant development needs in rural Ireland in the early and middle years of the 20th century, all have been confronted with the challenge of a rapidly changing society in recent years and with adjusting their respective analysis, mission and response in the face of this change. The Co-operative Movement has been largely rationalised, privatised and modernised. Muintir na Tire has largely ceased to exist as a national body though community councils continue to play some role at local level in many places. The I.F.A. has sharpened an abrasive sectionalism to emerge as one of the most professional and effective lobby groups in the country. Whether because, or in spite of the G.A.A., Gaelic games continue to flourish; Macra na Tuaithe (formerly the junior wing of Macra na Feirme), changed its name to Foroige and is now a major national youth organisation with a particularly notable presence in the large suburban estates in Dublin.

All of those organisations therefore have been confronted with the challenge of modernisation. All have approached the task differently and have experienced different kinds of outcomes.

In 1994 the authors of this paper undertook a review of Macra na Feirme. A number of findings that emerged in the course of this review are discussed here to explore how one particular organisation is addressing the task of modernisation and to highlight the importance of "participation" as the key determinant in redefining the nature of this organisation and its future potential and role.

In undertaking the review, the authors were keen to follow a methodology consistent with a philosophy of a commitment to a participative and bottom-up approach to community based organisational development.

Conventional approaches to evaluation conceive of it as an exercise in which information is gathered to enable decision makers make adjust-

ments to centrally driven programmes. This is a narrow view of evaluation; accords it a limited value and was considered inappropriate to any study which is explicitly concerned with issues of empowerment, collective responsibility and collective decision making.

An evaluation consistent with a 'bottom-up' approach to organisational development places the evaluator and the main actors within the organisation in a situation of mutuality and interdependence. While the evaluator can never assume an advocacy role and is ultimately external in all decision making within the organisation, the evaluator is also inputting data and insights into the decision making processes within the organisation, monitoring the impact of new information and welcomes the interrogation of the evaluator and the data as part of a developmental process.

In this way the evaluation process works towards creating a 'community of researchers' involving the evaluators and those being evaluated. While retaining clearly delineated responsibilities, the distinction between the evaluator and the evaluated comes to be de-emphasised so that a collaborative and spiral process of learning, action, reflection and decision making begins to occur.

It is not the intention in this paper to describe in detail the mechanics of this process. However, it is important to note that in the course of this review every member of Macra na Feirme was provided with an opportunity to contribute to an organisation wide consultation process and comment on various draft reports such that the membership was left with a sense that the process of preparing the report had value beyond that of the report itself. The review methodology was therefore a significant first step in implementing a truly participative and democratic organisational stance.

The Challenge of Participation

Participation is a much sought after component of community development across a spectrum of political perspectives. How participation is interpreted and utilised differs considerably depending on the dominant perspective of the organisation. At one end of the spectrum participation is seen as primarily concerned with general redistribution of power while at the other end it is seen as a strategy to efficiently implement decisions made by a privileged few.

In the case of the former the emphasis on redistributing power recognises that communities are not homogeneous entities in terms of individual member's access to resources and power, however evenly distributed these may appear to be from the outside. Participation strategies have to focus on the most disadvantaged rather than the community as a whole, otherwise existing power holders will have their position reinforced and internal structures that exclude individuals or entire sectors of the community will remain intact. The hallmark of this approach to participation is empowerment.

The long term nature of the empowerment process does not lend itself to the short term output-focused strategies. In addition the emphasis on process rather than immediate outcomes poses challenges for planners and evaluators. It is difficult to measure and quantify changes in belief, behaviour and understanding. Such constraints serve to limit the widespread application of this process. It is more common to find participation limited to aspects of an organisation's activities. In such instances overall control remains firmly in the hands of the designated decision-makers who determine the priorities and parameters of the organisation while the support of the general membership is mobilised after the experts have decided what is needed and how it will be delivered. The members role is largely passive either as beneficiaries or as victims. There is no imperative to shift towards autonomy. The main focus is on the outcomes for a single activity. The process of involvement and its long term potential are secondary to achieving preset objectives.

Within this model the much used term "Capacity Building" generally refers to skills which have a direct bearing on the ability of the members to implement a specific project rather than taking account of the prevailing historic, social, political and economic conditions operating within the community as a whole. For example, many initiatives which claim to encourage the participation of women rarely address the need for ongoing support to deal with the conflict that may emerge when long established gender based relationships are disrupted.

Given these considerations with regard to approaches to inclusiveness it was deemed appropriate to explore the essence of participation within Macra na Feirme from two perspectives, via the internal structures and processes of the organisation and the inclusiveness of its membership profile.

Internal Structures and Processes:

The aim of Macra na Feirme stated in its Constitution is:

"to promote and foster agriculture and rural development..."

by:

(a) Assisting the personal development of rural youth

(b) Promoting social and cultural education among rural youth of both sexes

(c) Providing opportunities for learning the skills and theory of farming

(d) Widening the interests of rural youth by increasing their store of general knowledge

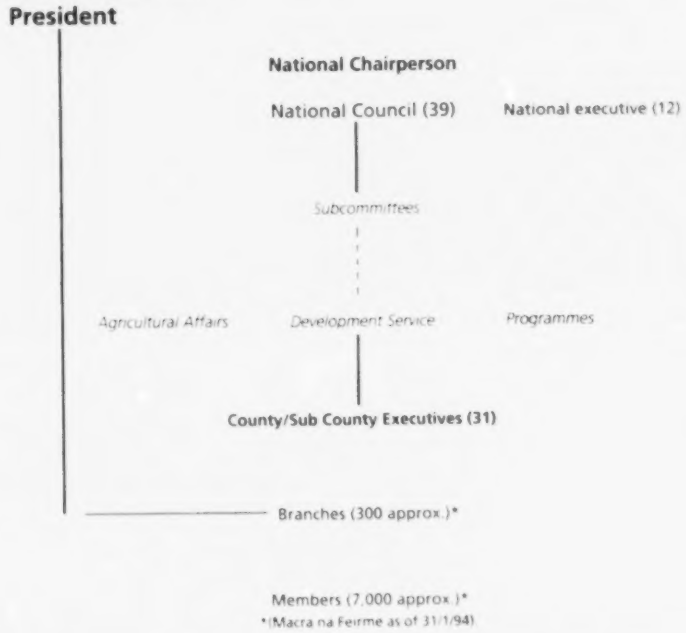
(e) Encouraging leadership in preparation for responsible roles in farming and community organisations"

(Rules and Constitution of Macra na Feirme)

This aims is implemented through a structure which provides representation from branch to regional and national levels. This structure is outlined in Table 1.

TABLE 1

VOLUNTARY STRUCTURE



Each of the Branches and the County/Regional Executive bodies are largely independent and self-governing entities. They can control their own affairs providing the rules they establish do not contravene those laid down by the organisation's constitution. The day-to-day affairs of the organisation are managed by the Chief Executive and the training and administrative staff.

As is evident from the foregoing diagram, the organisation is strictly hierarchical, based upon elaborative processes of representative elections and clearly delineated lines of responsibility and decision making. Such elaborate processes and structures however do not appear to enhance the quality of communications and sense of solidarity within the organisation and may in fact be blocking such organisational fluidity. In particular there was a general view of a disjuncture within the organisation between the local level (branch and county) and the national level.

It was felt that the National Council representative structure was not effective in bridging this gap either in terms of ongoing consultation with the membership or in keeping the membership informed on policies and decisions. There was a concern that the most effective person did not always go forward for election to the National Council. There was also a

growing concern that election to National Council is viewed as a political stepping stone with the incumbent's attention sometimes focused on matters and ambitions other than the support of branch and county structures.

It would be tempting to look to 'poor communications' as the basis for this hiatus in the organisation. Communication problems in the organisation however are themselves merely symptoms of a different kind of problem, one concerned with who 'owns' the organisation. The national/local divide in Macra na Feirme is a structural divide between different kinds of members - on the national side predominantly male, farming and vocational in orientation; on the local side less predominantly male; a majority of non-farmer members and an emphasis on social/recreational programmes.

The typical Macra na Feirme member is male (62%) in his twenties (65%) and from a farming background (64%). Young women are under represented at all levels of the organisation, particularly at national level.

While women are significantly under represented at national level, farmers are significantly over represented accounting for about 60% of the National Council membership while accounting for only 25% of the membership.

TABLE 2

Percentage of male and female members of National Council from 1989 to 1994

Year:	Male	%	Female	%	Total
1989	35	90	4	10	39
1990	33	85	6	15	39
1991	31	79	8	21	39
1992	31	79	8	21	39
1993	33	85	6	15	39
1994	36	92	3	8	39

(Chief Executive, Macra na Feirme, October 1994)

The study argued that declining membership, high rates of turnover in membership (40/50% per annum), the selective retention of members and the internal communication problems of the organisation all ultimately revolve on the farming/non-farming axis.

The study exposed a major divide between the organisation's leadership and its membership. The consultation process in many senses centred around a renegotiation of this relationship. A declining membership and an extraordinary high membership turnover has forced the leadership to confront a situation where the ultimate viability and public legitimacy of the organisation would inevitably be threatened. It is unlikely if a solution to this problem can be found in facile public relations exercises. Rather, the organisation is facing a much more fundamental, and ultimately more painful reappraisal of its social purpose, either as a (rural) youth organisation or as a young farmers organisation.

At national level the organisation continues as a young farming organisation-something of an I.F.A. novitiate. At branch level it is attempting to merge as a rural youth organisation.

Organisations typically go through cycles of growth and decline. What is critical is not that an organisation follows such a pattern, but how the organisation responds to the issues that must be dealt with at each stage within the cycle. Much of the literature referring to patterns of growth and decline identify five distinct phases which recur until the organisation terminates or revitalises and begins a new cycle (Cerlach and Hine, 1970:, Greiner, 1972). These phases can be summarised as follows:

1. Foundation Period - characterised by risk taking, a sense of anything being possible, freedom to creatively respond to situations.

2. Expansion Period - characterised by the emergence of procedures, a spirit of vigour, a sense of much activity.

3. Stabilisation Period - characterised by a clear vision of what is being done and how it is being achieved, a need for clarification of what the organisation is about.

4. Breakdown Period - characterised by concern with membership numbers, morale, waning productivity,external questioning of the validity of the organisation, polarisation of views within the organisation.

5. Transition Period - characterised by choices facing the organisation these include:

    - Extinction
    - Minimal Survival
    - Revitalisation

As an organisation arrives at a particular period it can opt to ignore the issues which are emerging or it can opt to accept the realities it is facing and attempt to gain the support of all its members in seeking to address the issues.

Not least of the questions which face Macra na Feirme are "where is it in terms of the cycle described above?" and "how best can it respond?". These are the questions which it must now address.

Voluntary Organisations such as Macra na Feirme can play an important part in the democratic process of the broader core society. They provide a useful vehicle for lobbying, critiquing government policy and provide most important training in leadership and governance to the membership. Equally they can play a major role in development policy formulation and provide a valuable conduit of interaction, debate and action between the local and the national. On occasion they can act as a valuable counterbalance to centralised power.

Considerations such as these contribute to a convincing argument in favour of voluntary organisations as valuable components of a democratic society. It is precisely because of their significance in this regard that voluntary organisations must dedicate themselves to continuous self appraisal in terms of the extent to which they themselves apply democratic principles and procedures to their own membership.

With regard to Macra na Feirme the review has shown how power is concentrated disproportionally in some sections of the membership specifically the male, propertied group. The democratic challenge confronting the organisation is therefore one of a redistribution of power on lines of class and gender.

Even if such a redistribution is to be effected, it is still unlikely that Macra na Feirme will ever achieve a broadly based membership or leadership in social class terms. Canon Hayes advocacy of "Neighbourliness" as the basis for social organisations is unlikely to heal or in the long term even conceal the rifts of class division and class conflict, integral to rural social structures. This maybe more easily accomplished in organisations with a purely or primarily recreational purpose, as in the GAA or even with a generalised personal and sectional development one such as Macra na Tuaithe. It is much more difficult in one with an explicit sectional interest such as Macra na Feirme, where the interest of the current dominant group within the organisation can be irreconcilable with those of other groups within the organisation.

This is the dilemma which confronts Macra as it attempts to democratise itself. From the general membership viewpoint, the answer lies in dispensing with the farming agenda. From the leadership point of view, one suspects that they conceive of the challenge as one of determining the minimum concessions which they must make in order to retain the sectional role and identity of Macra on the one level, while retaining sufficient members to keep the organisation viable. This is the democratic challenge the resolution of which will shape the future of this organisation in the coming years.

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Comparability and Future-Research In Adult Education: Methodological Challenges in the Euro-Delphi Survey

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PART 1

THE EURO-DELPHI SURVEY:

Origins, Implementation and Outcomes

The Euro-Delphi Survey, The Future Goals and Policies of Adult Education in Europe 1995, was conducted in sixteen countries/regions between 1993 and 1995. It was designed as a comparative study which would include both national profiles of current policies, provision and practice in adult education based on research data, and as a consultative process which would formulate policy recommendations to the EU on future policies, provision and practices. The project was managed by a European Steering Committee and directed by Professor Walter Leirman, University of Leuven, Belgium. Each participating country/region formed its own National Steering Committee of "experts" and consulted a national panel of respondents through a questionnaire survey and a national colloquium. A total of one-thousand, seven-hundred and sixty "experts" were consulted through the questionnaire which was the first round of the three round consultation. Outcomes of the questionnaire consultation were discussed at the National Colloquys which constituted the second round of consultation. The synthesised European research outcomes were discussed at the European Symposium in September 1995 and policies recommended. The European Symposium constituted the third round of consultation in what the Steering Committee describes as a "modified" Delhi research process.

The Euro-Delphi Research Project had its origins in a two-year delphi research project in three rounds on adult education undertaken in Flanders by the universities of Leuven and Ghent 1990-'92, and a subsequent one-round delphi type study in the Walloon area of Belgium conducted by Leuven in conjunction with the University of Louvain-la-Neuve. The Belgian studies focused on three issues: the needs of adult learners, the goals of adult education , and national and European policies.

The outcomes of the Belgian study were discussed at a seminar in Aachen in September 1992 where the proposal for a co-operative, comparative study in the twelve EU countries was mooted and support in principle by the representatives of the EU Task Force: Human Resources, Education and Youth. The Aachen seminar decided that the goals and methodologies developed in the Belgian experience were to be the basis for a larger European Delphi Research project. An application for the funding of such a project was made to the EU Task Force and approved for one year in July 1993 by the newly appointed Director, Mr. T. O'Dwyer. To operationalise the proposed research project a Steering Committee met in Leuven in September 1993, drawn principally from the Erasmus and Tempus university networks. The scope of the survey was expanded to include Slovenia, Estonia and the Czech Republic. The sixteen National Directors on the European Steering Committee were as follows:

Professor Eric Bocksteal, University of Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium
Dr. Liam Carey, St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland
Sr. Antonio Gonzalez, Barcelona, Spain

Professor Licinio Lima, University of Minho, Portugal
Dr. Maurizio Lichtner, Centro Europeo del'Educazione, Frascati, Italy
Professor Walter Leirman, University of Leuven, Belgium
Professor Dimitris Vergidis, University of Patras, Greece
Professor Talvi Marja, Tallinn Pedagogical University, Estonia
Professor Elizabeth Gerver, University of Dundee, Scotland
Professor Pierre Hebrard, University Paul Valery, France
Professor Paul Hartl, Charles University, Czech Republic
Professor Per Laurensen, University of Copenhagen, Denmark
Professor Peter Jarvis, University of Surrey at Guilford, England
Professor Cees Klaassen, University of Nijmegan, Holland
Professor Karl Kunzel, University of Koln, Germany
Professor Ana Krajnc, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia.
(Luxembourg and Northern Ireland were not included).

National Committees were set up in each country/region nominated by the national director for their particular expertise in the field of adult education. The members of the National Committee for Ireland were as follows:

Dr. Liam Carey, St. Patrick's College, Maynooth (Director)
Patrick Bennis, Department of Education
Mary Ryan, Extra-Mural Studies, Maynooth
Pat Stanton, AEO, Co. Mayo
Berni Brady, Director AONTAS
Geraldine Mernagh, Director, National Adult Literacy Agency
Tony Downes, AEO, Dublin West
Brendan Harpur, Director of Training, FAS
Michael O'Halloran, Education Officer, ICTU
Charles Carroll, Head of Management Development, IMI
David O'Connor, Director of Education, Teagasc
Deirdre Frawley, AEO, Limerick
Anne Murphy, Maynooth College (Research Officer).

The tasks of the National Steering Committee included:

- overseeing the process of the Irish contribution to the European research project
- selecting a national panel of respondents from the field of practice specified
- nominating a learners' panel
- facilitating the discussion process at the national symposium
- advising on the preparation of the national reports.

The National Steering Committee first met in December 1993 and by the end of that month the panel of respondents was established. Questionnaires were distributed to circa three hundred individuals and by March 1994 35% had been completed and returned for coding.

The panel of respondents were selected on the basis of their knowledge and expertise on one of the following fields of practice:

1. Vocational training of young people from 16 to 25 years
2. Vocational/processional training for adults both employed and unemployed
3. Adult basic education
4. General socio-cultural education including community education
5. Training within industry.

The respondents also represented four broad sector categories:

1. Policy makers
2. Practitioners in adult education
3. Education researchers
4. Critical commentators on education.

Ireland and Scotland involved panels of 20-25 adult learners in the consultation process and included their contribution in the national reports.

Basic Research Goals

The European Steering Committee agreed the following as the main research goals in January 1993:

Goal 1

To conduct a comparative delphi-type study, involving selected samples of knowledgeable individuals in twelve to fourteen European countries regarding their understanding of:

- adult learning needs in terms of issues and challenges confronting them
- the possible contribution of adult education to those issues and challenges
- the shaping of national and European policies in terms of tasks for educational authorities, and the possibilities for co-operation of policy and practice.

Goal 2

To contribute to the development of models for the comparative study of the education of adults in Europe.

Goal 3

To facilitate national debate between the national sample of "expert" respondents, other interested practitioners, policy makers and adult learners, based on the national reports.

Goal 4

To formulate propositions for the shaping of European and national policies on the education of adults and lifelong learning based on the final report.

Research Outcomes for Ireland

The full Irish national research outcomes were published to the panel of respondents in April 1995 with general conclusion as follows:

The research outcomes highlighted the following salient points with regard to the future goals and policies of adult education:

1. The centrality, importance and necessity of adult education in contributing to the understanding and solution of significant life problems faced by adults in society in the 1990s.
2. The socio-economic mission of adult education in combating and rectifying social inequality and social exclusion.
3. The relevance of adult education as a major factor in training for employment, in personal development and in instigating social change in areas of inequality.
4. The particular focus of adult education in areas of personal identity and interpersonal relations.
5. The manifold goals of adult education in the acquisition of skills and competencies and in the development of the individual in society.
6. The need for specific, comprehensive and enabling legislation.
7. The affirmation of the general thrust of present adult education policies though not the quality of provision and innovation.
8. Reinforcement of the need for consultation, participation and partnership among providers and between providers and learners.
9. Support for the principle of subsidiarity tempered by some degree of social and civic justice.
10. A demand for easier access by adults to relevant, accredited education provision where appropriate.
11. A reduction in bureaucratic demands.
12. The necessity of access to appropriate levels of accredited training for adult educators.
13. The importance of transnational networking and exchange of concepts and expertise.
14. The vital importance of consultation between providing agencies and adult learners at all levels of programme development, delivery and assessment.

Research Phasing

The Euro-Delphi project was implemented in three phases: preparation, research and discussion/decision, with a time-frame from Spring 1993 to Summer 1995.

Phase 1 - *Preparation* - January - December 1993

- Acquisition of research funds for the national studies
- Appointment of research staff
- Formation of representative national steering committees
- Preparation of code book, template and computer analysis programme
- Selection of respondents panel.

Phase 2 - *Research* - January - September 1993

- Mailing of questionnaires
- Coding and analysis of data
- Writing of reports

Phase 3 - *Discussion/Decision* - October 1994 - September 1995

- National symposia with panels
- Writing of national reports and policy recommendations
- European Symposium in Belgium.

The Delphi Research Method and the Research Instrument

The Delphi Research Method has a symbolic connection with the mythical Greek Oracle in that it basically involves the consultation of a source of wisdom around a specific problem and how that problem might be resolved in the future.

The original version of the Delphi Research Method in education was devised in the 1960 in Holland. It generally involved three rounds of consultation. The first round of written questions was administered to a panel of "experts". Analysed data was returned to respondents in the form of a report. This was followed by a second questionnaire with some questions repeated and with additional new ones. Further analysis and reportage followed. A final report was written on completion of the third round.

At the end of the 1960 a variant was introduced to the delphi method by M. Turoff (1975). The method was developed from being solely abstract and futurological towards being participatory and policy-developing. The policy oriented Delhi seeks to generate the strongest possible opposing views on the potential resolution of a major policy issue. Several options are presented for the discussion phase which leads to the recommendation on policy. Ideally the composition of the respondents' panel should allow for the possibilities of divergent opinions on issues.

The Euro-Delphi Research Instrument took the form of a common standardised questionnaire administered, in one round only, to panels of respondents nominated by the national steering committee in each of

the fourteen participating countries. All respondents completed the questionnaire on the basis that it represented their personal opinion and not the policy position of any organisation or education body. The final questionnaire was based on the Delphi Model pioneered in the Belgian projects with modifications by the European Steering Committee, They described it as a "modified" delphi study. English was the common language of the research, but as in any transnational comparative research, one of the major issues of concern was the non-equivalence of terminology, concepts and structures. It was agreed that the national idiom could accommodate such discrepancies provided that the reliability of the commonly agreed content was not undermined in translation. The questionnaire was made available by the University of Leaven in French, Dutch, Estonian and English.

Part Two of this paper deals in more detail with two of the methodological challenges i.e. the challenge of "comparability" and the challenge of "future-research" in adult education.

PART 2

EURO-DELPHI SURVEY:

Methodological Challenges of "Comparability" and "Future-Orientation"

While each stage of the Euro-Delphi project presented challenges regarding both content and method, two particular issues relating to the research have been chosen for consideration here. The first concerns the resolution of problems posed by various theories and methods of comparative research among such a large number of countries, contexts and systems. The second concerns the theory and method of consultative, future-oriented, policy-developing research given the spatial diversity in cultural, philosophical, historical and political backgrounds involved in the survey.

Comparability

The tradition of comparative research in education offered a number of options to the project on both content and method, involving analysis, discrimination, classification and evaluation.

The first and simplest form of comparison would present a structured commentary on each of the countries under study without direct comparison. All National Reports in the Euro-Delphi Survey included a profile of adult education for that country under five category headings using a common representational format as illustrated in Fig. 1.

Fig.1 - Common Representational Format for Profiling Adult Education

Category 1 - Vocational Training of Young People between aged 16 and 25 years

Programme	Government Department	Administration	Umbrella Organisation	Advisory Body	Laws/ Regulations	Execution at Local Level	Number & Spread	Budget 1994

Source: Carey (1995)

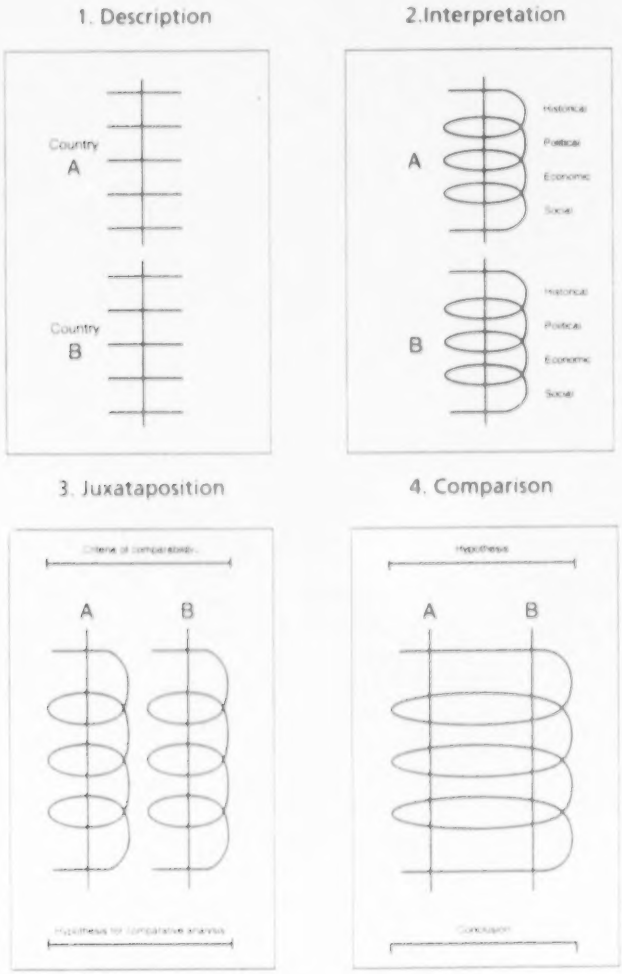
A second option for comparison would be the positivistic approach of the application of empirically verifiable methods to the data assembled by teams in each of the participating countries and the identification of common principles. The research instruments - in this case a common questionnaire - and the coding and analysis systems would, in theory, provide a degree of verifiable objectivity.

The more relativist approach of participant observation by visiting analysts was an option considered more appropriate to studies aimed at the development of regional or national policies and practices rather to a trans-national study such as the Euro-Delphi.

Some consideration of the historical-philosophical factors and forces in the context of adult education systems within each area under study was considered essential to a holistic comparative study. From this would emerge the comparative national characteristics of each system. But there was also the possibility that an over-emphasis on content as opposed to method would result in the study becoming an exercise in applied sociology with less regard for the issues of comparability. One possible resolution of this problem lay in the application of the comparative research model developed by Bereday which is primarily a syntheses between a historical-philosophical approach and a sociological approach. Bereday recommends a four step methodology after common systematic collection and representation of both quantitative and qualitative data from each unit studied, namely:

1. description and presentation
2. interpretation and evaluation
3. juxtaposition
4. generation of hypotheses from comparison of data from each unit.

Fig.2 Bereday's Four Steps of Comparative Analysis



Using this model quantitative data could be illustrated in tabular or vertical form for the purposes of comparability.

Comparative qualitative data could be represented in textual format with juxtaposition to illustrate comparative differences and similarities between systems and dynamics.

The "Comparison" stage of the research in Bereday's model can involve both "balanced'" comparison and "illustrative" comparison. Balance comparison involves systematic shuffling back and forth balancing data from one country against another. In a study as large as the Euro-Delphi, Bereday would probably have recommended illustrative comparisons, while acknowledging the selective and incomplete nature of the procedure.

Some of the difficulties in tabular representation of comparative data in a meaningful way for such a complex study as the Euro-Delphi are obvious from Fig. 3 where lengthy additional explanation was required.

Fig. 3
Countries with an/no Overall Law on Adult Education and % of National Respondents wanting this situation to be changed

	BEL	CAT	CZE	DAN	ENG	EST	FRA	GER	GRE	IRE	ITA	NDL	POR	SCO	SLO	SPA
YES=Y NO=N	N*1	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y*2	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	?*3
% WANTING CHANGE	-	91	79	49	67	61	46	70	86	92	99	70	88	67	84	71

*1 In both communities (Flemish and French) there is no overall law. The question about change was not asked

*2 In Germany, like in Belgium, Education is a matter of the provinces (Lander), a large majority of whom have such a law 76% of respondents say there is one for their province

*3 Similar situation in Spain: some autonomous provinces do have a law, others do not and the national "organic law" regulates school education and basic adult education

As our footnotes indicate, the answers must be approached with care. We have clear answers for 13 countries/regions: in the large majority (11), there is no general overall law, and in a minority of 3 (Catalonia, Estonia and France), there is, in countries with a fedealized structure - at least in the sphere of culture and education - such as Germany Spain and Belgium, one meets with mixed situations: in some Lander/autonomous/communities, there is an overall law, and in others; there is not. On the whole, we can draw a few interesting conclusions:

- **most countries/regions do not have an overall law**
- **in these cases,60 to 99% of the respondents want this situation to be changed; this is most evident for the Czech, the Greek, the Irish, the Italian, the Portuguese and the Slovene panels**
- **in the two or three cases where there is an overall law, half to two thirds of the respondents want the situation to be changed too!**

We have indeed asked for reasons in each case, but at this moment, we have not available the content analysis data from all the countries. The general desire for an overall law is slightly contradicted by the wish for changes in the few countries having an overall law.

Source: Leirman (1995)

The last decade of comparative research in education has sought to resolve the tension between the scientific approach which demands testable hypotheses supported by quantitative data and the sociological approach of contextualising comparative education within cultural, political and social structures. Even when comparative research is accepted as interdisciplinary and practiced as such some areas of unease remain. One source of unease is that comparative research assumes that all units to be compared can be examined in the light of a common variable and that meaning is constant for all units under comparison. This premise posed particular problems for the Euro-Delhi study with regard to two particular issues. Those issues were:

1. the presumption of "equivalences"
   and
2. the concept of the nation-state in an internationalised context.

1. Equivalence

In comparative research in adult education it is possible to distinguish four types of equivalence (Weilmans, 1993).

Firstly, there is functional equivalence comparing bodies/regulation etc. which play a similar role in the functioning of all systems under comparison.

Second is contextual equivalence which presumes that sub-systems function in similar ways within each system.

Thirdly, there is the problem of cultural equivalence which demands in-depth understanding of the philosophical-historical contexts of each element under study within each system and each sub-system.

Finally there is the problem of conceptual equivalence which presumes a common understanding of the terminology, concepts and constructs used in the research study.

The European Project Steering Committee made an attempt to resolve the problems of equivalence by debating the terminology and concepts used in the common questionnaire until a consensus of meaning was reached and expressed in both the English and French versions. Where the questionnaire was to be translated into national languages the nearest equivalent in terms of language and concepts was to be used judiciously in order to preserve the integrity of the research instrument and the validity of the outcomes. How well the terms and concepts were interpreted by the one-thousand, seven-hundred and sixty-five respondents in the sixteen participating countries is a matter for speculation. But the example is illustrative of the problems inherent in the search for equivalence in language-based research.

2. The concept of the nation-state

The use of the nation-state as a unit in comparative adult education research, though procedurally useful, presented a number of problems when identifying similarities and differences among systems. Among the problems was the acceptance that the concept of the nation-state had no in-built mechanism to identify and allow for the influences of sub-national and trans-national sub-systems at political, cultural and economic levels.

Nor did the unit of the nation-state allow for differentiation between nations and countries themselves on the basis of their comparative status in social, economic and political development. For more accurate comparison, each unit would need to be placed within a context of world-systems and world-sub-systems. This aspect of comparability is of particular relevance given the ambition of the Euro-Delphi study to extent the scope of the project to global dimensions with the inclusion of the US, Canada and India.

Future Research

Within future-research there are two distinct directions which can be described broadly as the prognostic and the constructive types of research into the future (Fache, 1993).

The prognostic method bases its predictions on the continuation of trends in a trajectory from the past into the present and towards the future. The prognostic researcher is merely an analyst in the process.

The constructive future- researcher adopts the position that alternative futures can be constructed by direct intervention in present trends. The constructive future-researcher views his/her role, therefore, as that of a change agent.

The Delphi Method can be effectively used in both types of future-research with the policy- developing, participative variant the most appropriate to the latter. The original Delphi method sought to establish a consensus of opinion among a homogenous group of selected "experts" through at least three rounds of consultation, feedback and dialogue. The policy-developing variant on the method seeks to generate the strongest possible opposing views on the potential resolution of major issues, setting priorities and evaluating practice. It regards itself as action-based research designed to inform future policy making through systematic, structured public dialogue on research data outcomes. In the particular case of the Euro-Delphi project the research instrument (a common questionnaire) was administered to national panels of respondents selected for their sectoral representative experience and expertise in adult education. The questionnaire represented the first round of consultation. The second round, in the form of national symposia, was the opportunities for debate on the research outcomes and for the formulation of national policy recommendations following that debate.

The final round of consultation was a European Conference in Leuven in September 1995 on the synthesised research outcomes with discussion leading to agreed policy recommendations to the EU on the future of adult education and lifelong learning.

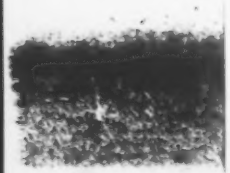
General Concluding Comments on Outcomes and Methods

The outcomes of the integrated research data indicate a need to expand on both the Delphi Research Method itself and on the Delphi process of consultation undertaken for this study.

In response to questions about policy tasks for public authorities in the common questionnaire indicate a demand for a "quality-oriented policy-model" which would measure public policy less in terms of "control" and more in terms of needs-orientation and quality-control.

Outcomes further indicate that the "consultative" nature of the Delphi Method should include consultation with the "expert opinion" of the voluntary workers in the adult education system and with adult learners.

Feinstein and Leirman (1995) suggest that the Euro-Delphi Project should be expanded as a major contribution to the knowledge base and dialogue towards the European Year on Education and Lifelong Learning 1996/'96 and the UNESCO World Conference on the Education of Adults 1997. To facilitate this the identified difficulties with comparative adult education research and with policy-oriented future-research outlined above need to be addressed in the immediate future.



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For over a decade now a quiet revolution has been taking place in adult education in Ireland. The change is primarily about the way participation has become a key concept in both the discourse and the practice of adult education. This collection of articles is concerned with the centrality of this concept in our thinking, practice and research.

The articles in this book have come out of the work of the Centre in the years 1995-96. They are contributions by the staff of the Centre and visiting speakers at conferences. It is hoped that coalitions and solidarities will be forged by the launching of this series and others will be encouraged to share and exchange ideas.

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